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The impact of work based learning: a creative exploration of learners' experience

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by Deborah Susan Scott

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the impact of work based learning through a creative exploration of learners' experience. The impact expected in work based learning is at personal, professional and/ or organisational level, and might extend beyond the organisation, to social order. However, the nature and extent of impact is variable, and sometimes not evident at all. This variability and apparent lack of impact is of pedagogical and economic concern for all parties involved in the tripartite work based learning relationship: learners expect to perceive some benefit from undertaking such a course of study; higher education providers need to show relevance to the working world; organisations assume there will be operational or strategic outcome from their employees' engagement in work based learning. Wider than this, the significance of learning of relevance to the United Kingdom's productivity is articulated in the government's Industrial Strategy (GOV.UK, 2017).

The investigation takes a narrative research approach to explore the experiences of recent Masters graduates of a negotiated work based learning programme for distance learners. The data were analysed using the concepts of Thirdspace, equality, creativity, and critical reflection. The creation of play scripts is an innovative feature of this thesis, representing an interpretation of participants' stories about their work based learning experience. This imagined embodiment of learners' experience facilitated greater empathy and understanding, supporting a critical perspective on the nature of impact.

Insights emerging from the research suggest that impact was experienced by all research participants, but varied in nature and extent due to factors such as employment position; self-confidence, self-perception and personal experience; the culture and economic position of the organisation. Some participants' employment position supported their use of their work based learning to instigate organisational change. For others, a marginal employment position offered opportunity to use learning for professional development. However, marginalisation might also hinder impact beyond the personal when combined with other factors such as an organisation's financial constraints, and might prevent enactment of emerging radical ideas about the social order. Even when impact was deep, it might not be overt. A further insight was that collaboration was significant in effecting impact. This investigation offers a new perspective on impact in the context of work based learning, which highlights the creative, subtle and emotional aspects.

The findings prompt review of teaching, learning and assessment practice leading to identification of strategies to accommodate and support students' performance and development.

Declaration

The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or another HEI except in minor particulars, which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution was made explicit.

Signed:

Deborah Susan Scott

Contents

Act 6 Epilogue (Conclusion)

Tables

Learning profile

Introduction

What follows is a brief consideration of key learning experiences arising from my EdD studies, and their connection to my practice, thesis and ideas for future research and practice.

Research Methodologies for Professional Enquiry

This module, which introduces students to a range of concepts and approaches pertinent to educational research, offered an opportunity to apply a particular approach in order to carry out a small piece of research into an aspect of one's practice. For me, it proved a helpful re-introduction to concepts and terminology first encountered when taking my Masters in Education some time ago. I carried out research into the impact in the workplace of work based learning students' disabilities. The experience indicated that I should not make assumptions, based on my training or my reading, as the effects of disability were varied and unpredictable. I saw that while seeking to support students with a disability to succeed academically, this could be a form of labelling, confirming inadequacy. While all research participants could identify difficulties their disability caused, they also had skills, strengths and talents that in everyday life they could use and have recognised. This research indicated the complexity of people's experience and that conducting small-scale research, with a critical focus, was possible and of personal interest.

The module introduced me to interpretivist approaches to research, and made me aware that I had interpreted disability in terms of learning, and held assumptions due to my professional experiences, and context. It also gave me experience of trying to share control of the interview with participants; this worked well, and encouraged me to seek to adopt this stance in the research for my thesis. The experience gave confidence to take a narrative research approach in the thesis, as this appeared to support participant control of content. It also provided recording and transcribing experience, and of analysising data in relation to research themes.

One theorist I did not expect to return to later in my studies was Peter Clough, who was outlined during the Research Methodologies module as someone who fictionalised his data. I think my mind closed down at that point; I failed to ask (or wonder) about the rationale for his approach, rejecting it as not 'proper' research. As you will see in my thesis, my thinking has changed since then, and Clough has influenced my approach to dealing with the data. I came to understand Clough's desire to get to the heart of issues,

and also felt that use of fiction might be a way to show the respect for and interest in the research participants that I felt, and convey something of their feelings and thinking. Alongside this, I valued Clough's reference to the need for transparency in one's research, and sought to be transparent in my thesis.

Social Theory and Education: Key Issues and Debates

This module was an opportunity to explore the ideas and arguments of a social theorist and then apply them to an aspect of one's professional practice. I considered Rancière's work, *The ignorant schoolmaster: Five lessons in emancipation*, in relation to a particular work based learning module on which I teach, taken each year by over a thousand full time undergraduates.

I shared the belief underpinning Rancière's work, that all are equal, and that it is material inequality, engendered by the dominant social order, that leads to discrimination. While I welcomed Rancière's negative view of explication, I was surprised at his reasoning: whereas I could feel inferior to the explicator when having things explained to me, Rancière argues for a reversed hierarchy, with the explicator dependent on being needed to explain. This caused me to question experiences and assumptions held over years. At the same time, I recognised Rancière's assumption of equality, which seemed to be something I had long 'felt' but not articulated (when, for example, finding that the vibrant, nurturing street of my childhood was in an area perceived many years later as socially deprived, and therefore in need of extra funding; when recognising the skills and understandings of an adult basic skills student or a parent on a family literacy course). I aspired to the ideal of not only believing in equality but also enacting it.

Choosing to examine a module in which there was much explication, I was led to see that this explication could be considered as the tutor 'standing at the door' of the learner's journey; the module appeared to recognise equality more than I had perceived. However, as a tutor, I was aware that there were situations where explication and support were needed, in order for learners to pass the module; more was needed than driving their will. In thinking about this variation in learner approach to and experience of the module, I drew on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital, realising that while I might aspire to a world of equality, there is much material inequality and as a tutor I have responsibility to facilitate learners' academic achievement.

In my thesis, I was interested in how equality featured in learners' work based learning experiences. I was surprised to find that it featured strongly in contrasting ways for three students (Lance, Callum and Justin). While I found that having equality as a theme for my analysis facilitated a deeper awareness of learners' experiences and values, I also found other concepts (particularly those of Bourdieu) useful when considering learners' variations.

Creativity in Practice

This module introduced me to the concept of Thirdspace. I came to review my undergraduate experiences, where, rather than making the most of all the opportunities undergraduate study offers, I had focused solely on academic success, studying very hard. I see now how, for me, the uncertainty and uncomfortable feelings that Thirdspace holds outstripped the potential it also offers for experimentation, exploration and excitement. As an undergraduate, I came to terms with leaving Firstspace, but the thought of Secondspace was disturbing. This perception has since spurred me on to be more adventurous, for example, through writing for publication and applying to speak at international conferences. Regarding my thesis, it helped me persist with exploring what for me were new ways of treating data: something I would previously have rejected as too 'alternative', wishing to stick to more familiar approaches. I also identified Thirdspace as a research theme: perceiving learners' work based studies as Thirdspace, I was interested in how it was for them; the extent to which it was a time of adventure or anxiety. I also saw that it could lead in to a further research theme: creativity, as I think this can be encouraged in some Thirdspaces but not (as with me) all.

Being creative in Thirdspace led me to change my plans for the creative element of the module assignment from something of obvious and immediate relevance to my practice, to something more open, which combined reality and imagination. The feeling of adventure this triggered was energising, making me keen to continue engaging with the unfamiliar.

I found aspects of Robinson's consideration of creativity (in particular the three stages he identifies, and creativity in organisations) relevant in my analysis of learners' experiences in my thesis.

Cultural Practices

As indicated, Creativity in Practice had made me aware that I could be more adventurous in my approaches and interpretations of my experiences and situations. In the course of reviewing my undergraduate studies, and creating my project for that assignment, I had imagined experiences I might have encountered if I had actually applied my theoretical knowledge of anthropology and carried out fieldwork. Instead, as an under confident anthropology undergraduate, I remained focused on the theoretical elements of the subject only. I saw Cultural Practices as a way to make those imagined places real (to paraphrase part of the subtitle to Soja's *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*). This desire was strengthened when encountering Clifford Geertz's work for the first time since studying anthropology as an undergraduate. Although I had learned to be somewhat dismissive of him (through the predominantly structuralist approach to social anthropology in my course) I had enjoyed reading his work, finding it lively and comprehensible. Through my EdD studies, I found that his championing of thick description was appreciated and he had been far more influential than I had anticipated when I was an undergraduate. This gave me confidence to pursue my interest in detail and in the particular.

I decided to use this module as a Thirdspace opportunity, carrying out research into festivals, and beginning to learn about fieldwork. I gained skills in observation and making field notes, and found analysing data in relation to the cultural context challenging, with potential for unexpected insights. While I have not used this learning specifically in my thesis, I have used the experience of feeling excitement at entering unfamiliar territory; this encouraged me to explore incorporation of play scripts into my thesis. It also prompts me to encourage learners to consider adventure in their studies. I anticipate the likelihood of carrying out further ethnographic research, perhaps in collaboration with colleagues or learners.

Institutions, Discontinuities and Systems of Knowledge

Although I have worked in several contexts that might challenge or appear inconvenient to the prevailing order, I found it difficult to relate in a profound way to the concept of discontinuity in my current practice. There are ways in which the courses I teach differ from the predominant provision in my university (the work based learning course for full time undergraduates takes them out of the university and into the workplace, requiring the use of employability skills in an environment likely to be of rapid change and unpredictability; the course taken by the learners participating in my thesis is for

part time distance learners in employment, likely to be mature). However, at the time of taking this module my perception was that the challenges were largely administrative, without the depth needed for an assignment. This perception now seems somewhat superficial. For example, one could consider the extent to which the undergraduate work based learning module challenges dominant perceptions of the purpose of universities, and what constitutes appropriate provision. However, at the time of the module, the advent of provision for degree apprentices dominated staff thinking. I perceived this innovation as necessitating discontinuity for both the university and my department. Reading over my assignment and feedback, I think I began a radical journey, which perhaps should have led me to an understanding of degree apprentices as posing another (albeit large) administrative discontinuity, rather than disrupting the social order. The feedback makes me think that perhaps I have far to go in this radical journey. Right now, I am unsure of it, and my thesis is not written from a critical theorist perspective. However, I found the work of Debord and Baudrillard resonant with positions and ideas I had encountered or held at different times in my life, and a critical theorist perspective is likely to be of pertinence for future research.

Thesis in Context

Thesis in Context enabled me to order my thinking, understanding, and interests into a research proposal. I felt drawn to explore the experience of work based learning for those learners taking the part time distance learning courses on which I teach.

This choice was prompted by personal irritation with the specific meaning the word 'impact' has assumed in higher education, i.e. publication in high-ranking journals. Within work based learning, impact for learners could also be of a personal, professional and organisational nature. While sometimes aware of personal development, and career changes, I was unsure of the nature and extent of impact for learners more generally, and of its fit with the types of impact referred to in the literature. I thought researching learners' work based learning experiences would allow me to explore this aspect of their studies in some depth.

My research themes were drawn from my studies, using concepts I had explored, which would support detailed exploration of learners' experiences, and which were concepts resonant with my own experiences as a learner (Thirdspace); my values (equality); my appreciation of their value within work based learning (creativity).

Thesis in Context facilitated consideration of research methodology and research methods, leading to identification of social constructionism as an appropriate theoretical stance. This would underpin use of narrative research, which would fit my desire for participants to have control of the research discussions, and to find out about their experiences in detail. Anticipating use of narrative research was also exciting, in that I would not be limiting what was said to what I expected to be said, so the data might yield surprising insights.

Conclusion

Outlining my learning in this way, helps illustrate how my thesis has been influenced by my thinking, experience, and interests developed over the entire course of the EdD, and the insights it has sparked in my practice. I have indicated briefly ways in which approaches might be further applied following my thesis acceptance. My thesis has provided an opportunity to follow through some of the course concepts and approaches, and marks the end of a stage in a learning journey, while offering signposts to future directions.

The impact of work based learning: a creative exploration of learners' experience

Act 1 Prologue (Introduction)

Purpose of the thesis

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of work based learning[1] in higher education through a creative exploration of learners' experience. Impact is a core concept in pedagogy: there is expectation that there is an outcome from teaching, that learning has impact. In work based learning, impact is generally considered to be personal, professional and/ or organisational. In higher education the term 'impact' has acquired a specific meaning connected with the publication record of academic staff. This relates to quality assurance of higher education research and research resource allocation through the Research Excellence Framework (United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI), 2019). In this thesis I examine impact from the learner's perspective and within the learner's context. In choosing to do so I was influenced in part by my personal interest and professional experience, and also by reading the work of practitioners such as Mumford and Roodhouse (2010) and Nottingham and Akinleye (2013). While I intended to look for evidence of impact using the personal, professional and organisational categories, I also wished to recognise impact that could not be so defined, and why there might appear to be no impact. The data this investigation yielded offered an opportunity for analysis and understanding of the learner's work based learning experience, and of impact, with consequential implications for my practice as a work based learning lecturer.

Investigating the impact of work based learning, and doing so now, is important for a number of reasons. In addition to the potential personal interest a learner might have in studying that is of direct relevance to her work, the considerable cost of higher education is likely to prompt further concerns about material benefits of study (for

[1] I use 'work based learning' throughout the thesis, as this is the form used in my department's practice and publications. Some sources refer to 'work-based learning'. I use that form when referencing those sources.

example, promotion or more general career or professional development). This might make work based learning programmes appear potentially beneficial, or at least worth evaluating in terms of the possible material outcomes to be gained.

Organisations sponsoring employees to participate in work based learning may have specific requirements or expectations, or more general interest in supporting staff development, with a general expectation of organisational benefit from interested, engaged employees, and that work based learning will support such an outcome. Also, there appears to be a cultural appreciation of the relevance and value of work based learning. This is partly as different forms become more prevalent (through, for example, the apprenticeship levy leading more organisations to employ apprentices at different levels of education), and partly perhaps due to changing trends following the 2008 recession. A further recognition of the value of work based learning is the government's Industrial Strategy (GOV.UK, 2017), which recognises the need for learning relevant to the support and development of the United Kingdom's productivity. The propensity to use learning to support innovation, supporting organisations' stability and growth, is pertinent, and up-to-date knowledge of work based learning's effect and impact is relevant.

Being able to demonstrate that one's work based learning programmes can have positive impact for individuals and organisations is important for higher education providers commercially and ethically. Such demonstration indicates the provider's currency in and engagement with the external world (Major, 2016).

My interest in researching the impact of work based learning arose through my work as a senior lecturer in a work based learning department within a higher education institution in the United Kingdom. This department was established over twenty years ago and delivers a range of distance learning work based learning courses (undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level) for part time mature learners who are in substantive employment. In the next Act I consider the nature of this particular provision and its similarities to and differences from other work based learning provision. (Throughout the thesis chapters are referred to as Acts, matching the inclusion of the play scripts collection *Voices from the edge: Crossing borders* (Appendix 1)). The programmes particularly relevant to this thesis are Master of Arts, Master of Science, and Master of Business Administration. All participants

in the research had recently graduated from one of these programmes, which are negotiated and flexible in nature. Blended learning is used, combining workshops, online and face to face tutorials, bespoke resources, and formative assessment in order to offer an individualised programme relevant to each learner's study priorities. Modules within each programme are developed and delivered by academic members of the department, all of whom are also personal academic tutors (PATs), responsible for pastoral and generic academic support and guidance to specific students. The PAT is also the student's supervisor for the compulsory research project, usually undertaken as the penultimate or final assignment in the Masters programmes.

The department has received recognition over the years for the quality of its work and in 2018, the year marking its 20th anniversary, was recognised by Universities UK as one of the United Kingdom's 'best breakthroughs' for 'transforming professional development in the workplace' (Universities UK, 2018). Such evaluation contributes to my justification for choosing to research impact. I believe the provision's longevity and recognition for quality is partly due to its ability over the years to offer potential for personal, professional and organisational impact in a balanced way, without favouring one category over another. Additionally, it is possible the programmes offered accommodate further aspects of impact that might not fit these categories.

However, I have found during my time as a tutor that being mindful of impact in one's teaching can be challenging. I speak more about this in the next Act, explaining how my perception of differences in outcomes for learners regarding impact led me to make initial exploration of the subject, and to write a paper in which I considered individual impact alongside the part played by the learner's manager in effecting organisational impact (Appendix 2/ Scott, 2017). Here in the Prologue, it is relevant to note that a personal concern for my professional practice led me to research impact for my thesis. In my experience, one colleague might refer to a student's reduction of a company's costs through developing an improved procedure for a core business activity; another might outline a student's rapid promotional journey. A link between organisational or professional development and the student's studies might be made. In contrast, regarding the students for whom I was tutor, I was uncertain whether such impact was experienced, and, if it was, how it connected with their studies. We learn in the workplace; there can be personal, professional and organisational change and development without a programme of work based study. I wished to develop my understanding of impact beyond the level I reached as a tutor, to help me assess my

practice and identify aspects for development. This concern for impact is shared by other work based learning practitioners, as I examine in the next Act.

The inclusivity I recognise in the programmes on which I teach is a common feature of work based learning, as Helyer (2015a) suggests. At undergraduate level, learners unlikely to consider university level study as something they would/could do, might view a part-time work-related learning programme differently (particularly if their employer supports and perhaps sponsors their enrolment). For some, possession of a first degree or a Masters might be a requirement for career progression. The provision at undergraduate and postgraduate level is accessed by a wide range of individuals, of whom many (at undergraduate level) are unlikely to have participated in any other form of higher education. During the time my research was underway, three former students of the Masters programme on which I teach worked with me to create a poster contribution for a widening participation conference (Centre for Work Related Studies, 2018). Following the conference for which it was designed, it was shown at further conferences and each time it triggered questions about the provision and the strategies used to support widening participation. The provision's Best Breakthrough award was part of a MadeAtUni campaign, where it was described as 'supporting people from a wide variety of backgrounds and careers to gain, or enhance, their qualifications' (MadeAtUni, 2018). Inclusivity is a professional value I hold, and it connects to a personal valuing of equality, so the potential of this provision to be inclusive is significant for my personal and professional engagement. In terms of impact, I wished to see how a learner's characteristics (including personal ones such as confidence and skills, and professional ones, such as experience and organisational role) might influence the nature and effect of impact, and what implications this suggested for my practice.

Conceiving and proposing the research thus arose from the professional interest in impact I had already begun to explore, an awareness of the value of the flexible, negotiated nature of the programmes I teach on in terms of potential for impact, and a valuing of the programmes' inclusivity. In designing, planning and conducting this investigation, I used learning and insights gained from my professional practice and also from my doctoral studies, for which a summary is provided in my Learning profile.

Research aims and questions

Having been perturbed as a lecturer by the variable evidence of impact, and a feeling that programmes on which I teach might not always facilitate its recognition, I seek to develop a critical awareness and understanding of impact, looking for evidence of it at personal, professional, or organisational level, and even beyond this to the social order. The first three levels are those suggested in the literature, with which my understanding and experience of work based learning concur. I have less professional experience of the fourth level, pertaining to the social order, which is considered in more critical literature. I consider this literature, and that relating to the other levels, in the next Act.

The professional experiences and context outlined above, and my personal valuing of equality and inclusivity, led me to develop the aim to find out about the impact of the work based learning experience through gaining knowledge and understanding of the learner's experience of work based learning beyond that which is evident in academic assessment. I perceived that impact was not always considered in detail in all assignments, and that assignments did not necessarily capture the full measure of impact; there could be impact which occurred outside the focus of the assignment, but which was nevertheless occasioned due to an individual's studies; impact might occur after the period of time the individual spent on a particular module. Also, it was pertinent to understand how and why there might be no apparent impact.

I therefore wished to gather data about individual learners' work based learning experiences, discovering the key elements of this experience, and the nature and degree of impact this related to. I selected a number of pertinent concepts with which to analyse the data collected. The concepts chosen are Thirdspace, equality, creativity and critical reflection. A rationale and outline are given below, with more detailed consideration in the next Act. The concepts helped me identify key constituents of the experience, and recognise impact.

The following research questions underpin my exploration:

- What are the constituents of work based learning experience for learners on the individually negotiated work based learning Masters programme for distance learners?

- What is the impact of their work based learning experience at personal, professional, organisational and/or societal level?

I intended my approach to be open and creative, in order to facilitate emergence of data that a more constrained approach might prevent. My specific focus is the negotiated work based learning Masters programme for distance learners delivered by my department, for which I am a senior lecturer, and the participants are recent graduates of this programme. The aim is to gain understanding of their experience, and of the nature and extent of the experience's impact. Such understanding leads to identification of developmental plans for my practice, to support effectiveness in facilitating impact.

Research approach

My position as an 'insider-researcher' (Costley, Elliott & Gibbs, 2010, p. 4) provided opportunities to access data, but I also wished to ensure that I researched in a way that did not cause inconvenience or unnecessary disquiet in my department. I carried out research discussions with six individuals who were recent graduates of the Masters work based learning programme on which I teach. I had been a tutor for some of their modules. For all participants I had been their personal academic tutor and was the tutor and supervisor for their final module, which was their major research project. It was still easy to make contact with this group. I could not disrupt or influence their studies, as all had completed their programmes by the time the research took place. Their graduate status might also have influenced the nature of their engagement, as I discuss in later Acts. My position as their personal academic tutor and research supervisor gave me some long-term knowledge of their study approach and performance, and so it was not necessary to request information on these issues from colleagues.

The methodology is discussed briefly below, and in detail in Act 3. My approach was social constructionist, and I used narrative research, believing both to facilitate the open approach to data collection I wished to take, as opposed to a strategy in which I controlled the content of what was said.

A key feature of the thesis is the inclusion of play scripts, each one representing aspects of my analysis for a participant (*Voices from the edge: Crossing borders*, Appendix 1). I set out the circumstances leading to the decision to use such a method in Act 3, and cross-reference to the play scripts throughout the thesis. Here, it is appropriate to note

that the inspiration that led to their creation and inclusion was a desire to make aspects of my research accessible and engaging. The process that led to the play scripts' creation and incorporation into the thesis to support and represent aspects of the analysis, was influenced by the work of narrative researchers such as Clough (2002), and those carrying out arts-based enquiry, such as Page, Grisoni and Turner (2014) and Pässilä, Oikarinen and Harmaakorpi (2015). This literature is explored in the next and subsequent Acts. The creative process also impacted (in different ways) on my awareness and understanding of each participant - the nature of the impact, values they might hold, possible explanations for dilemmas they faced, determination to succeed - that I had not recognised fully during their studies. This enriched perception was unanticipated and I valued it greatly. I explore this aspect further in Act 5.

Key research theories in the field

The tripartite nature of work based learning, where the requirements of learner, higher education and workplace need to be met (Workman & Garnett, 2009) leads to much of the research into work based learning being focused on one or more of these three parties.

Where learners' experiences are the focus, information has been gained through interviews, their evaluations of provision, assignments and so on. The learner's voice might be interwoven throughout a piece and clearly indicated, as in Mumford and Roodhouse's (2010) synthesis of academics' consideration of different elements of work based learning delivery with stories of personal experience written by learners. In other work, such as that of Raelin (2008), the learner is portrayed more passively, the concern being largely with the provider's role.

Some authors consider the specific challenges that work based learning presents for learners, tutors and employers. For example, Laycock and Karpel (2016) recognise the challenges for both learners and tutors arising from a negotiated work based learning programme. Minton and Walsh (2016) consider the challenge of active involvement in learning – expected in work based learning – and the consequent development of autonomy, which might differ from a more passive role a learner might have experienced in previous education. Costley and Lester (2010), in considering the personal, professional and organisational impact potential of work based learning, note employers' influence on the depth and nature of this impact: inflexibility, and concern

with immediate results might cause their employees' increased ability and professionalism to be unrecognised. Through the process of writing my paper (Appendix 2/Scott, 2017), I found that while the employer's attitude was significant for organisational impact, and that a learner's senior status might facilitate impact, the two elements combine in different ways with different effects, suggesting that work based learning tutors need to support learners with thought and perception in managing application of their learning. Critten's (2016b) examination of how a practitioner might develop practice to better support learners in engendering organisational impact is pertinent.

The literature indicates the potential for tension. For example, while some, such as Raelin (2008), Garnett, Costley and Workman (2009) and Garnett, Abraham and Abraham (2016) indicate a focus on organisational learning, Critten (2016a) suggests the workplace receives little attention in the literature, and that the individual learner is the primary focus. Additionally, Wall (2015) highlights the individualistic nature of much of the focus on work based learning to date, and how such a perspective might preclude learning for a larger grouping, or constrain a wish for impact beyond the individual.

The establishment of the apprenticeship levy, and the impression gained from networking at conferences, is that degree apprenticeship is a growing form of work based learning, although recruitment growth so far appears modest (Office for Students, 2018). While research into this provision is likely to increase, at the time of writing this thesis it was largely still in development, and my investigation did not consider it. Instead, the focus of my research is individual learners in work based learning. This decision was justified on practical grounds: the majority of my work in work based learning has been and continues to be with individual learners on negotiated programmes, so taking this research focus could lead to deeper knowledge and understanding of longstanding practice. Such research was practicable as access to individual learners was possible.

Theoretical frameworks

Dewey's (1938) belief in the essential connection between conceptual knowledge and practice is central to the theory of work based learning. Individuals are seen as agents in their development, rather than empty vessels waiting to be filled by an educator.

From each experience, an individual gains meaning. This experience and meaning shape future experiences (what actually happens and one's perception of this). This continuous interaction links with Kolb's (2015) concepts. He presents Theodore Cook's 1914 review of the spiral in nature as a 'wonderful description of the learning process' (p. 63). His inclusion of Cook's reference to the dynamism of the spiral, and its ability to explain the past as well as to prophesy the future, is an apt image for thinking of learning within work based learning, and the possibility of impact.

In Dewey's (1938) concept of experiential learning, critical reflection is essential. Kolb (2015), commenting on Dewey's work, notes that for critical reflection to occur, the experience needs to shock one out of routine assumptions and habitual action. Otherwise, behaviour can continue without the deep thought that can lead to new understandings. Kolb (2015) refers to the synthesis of reflection and experience (rather than perceiving reflection to occur after the experience), and perceives the learning process to be holistic, including experiencing, thinking, reflecting and acting. He identifies three types of reflection: reflective observation; critical reflection in which assumptions and alternative perspectives are considered; integrative reflection, whereby 'action is reformed by reflection and reflection is reformed and informed by action' (p. 60).

In this research, I was interested to find out about the connection between studies, experience, reflection and future actions. I worked with a perception of experiential learning arising from Dewey's (1938) work, although all of Kolb's points referred to above were also pertinent: the idea of looking backwards and forwards in a learning spiral, of reflecting in different ways, with different results, and of the synthesis of experience and reflection, indicated the complex potential of exploring impact, and in understanding its diversity in nature and extent across the research participants.

Further perspectives continue to be found in the literature, perhaps prompted by societal, economic and political changes nationally and globally. For example, an international perspective might question the centrality of critical reflection: core to approaches in the United Kingdom, in other cultures it might fit less well with common ideologies. Other concepts unfamiliar to western cultures might be more relevant and useful in the indigenous country and might also offer a frame for outsiders to explore (Wall, 2015). Such perspectives were considered, and are outlined in the next Act.

Research themes: Introduction

In order to explore impact of work based learning creatively, I identified a number of concepts with which to analyse the study experience, and the nature and extent of impact, and adopted them as research themes. These concepts are introduced here, and discussed further in the next Act.

Soja's (1996) idea of Thirdspace seemed an appropriate conception with which to view a period of learning, a time where there is development and change, where one has left behind Firstspace (one's former perspectives and understandings); one anticipates a Secondspace (how one's world will be following on from this Thirdspace time of uncertainty and exploration), where there is a 'radical scepticism toward all established epistemologies, all traditional ways of confidently obtaining knowledge of the world' (Soja, 1996, p. 81). Soja's (1996) portrayal of this period, and Bhaba's (1994) consideration of border-crossing, as one moves from familiarity to uncertainty, anticipating the next stage, facilitated my perception and understanding of participants' experiences; these conceptions prompted a searching for evidence of feeling uncertain, of being uncomfortable, of questioning one's views, of thinking differently, of perceiving opportunity. Thirdspace was a concept to aid consideration of the personal impact of work based learning, and exploration of any connections between this and professional and organisational impact.

I chose equality as a concept, having explored it during the course of my studies, and realising then that it had been a core value I have held all my life, yet never articulated (see Learning profile). Reading Rancière's work (1987/ 1991) helped me understand my stance and, regarding work based learning, connect it to my feeling of discomfort and frustration regarding impact, particularly when perceiving how learners' immersion in ideas from their studies, and changing perceptions of themselves and the workplace often led to little if any apparent organisational impact. I was interested to see how participants' behaviour indicated an assumption of equality and a use of it in the application of their learning; how equality impacted on their experience of work based learning. Rancière's (1987/ 1991) concepts of 'citizen' and 'reasonable man' (p. 91) were clear portrayals of two stances to look for in relation to the research participants. (I explain my decision to maintain the latter term, rather than choosing an alternative more suited to contemporary culture in the West, in Act 2). I did not anticipate that any

participant had upturned the social order but wondered to what extent perceptions of the social order influenced their experience of work based learning.

Creativity was the third concept used in exploring participants' experience. Having perceived this quality to be something of an individual 'gift', used by some unique characters in the workplace, but otherwise assigned to 'free time' through hobbies and so on, or to geniuses in the arts and sciences, I began to think differently when I encountered the concept during my studies (Learning profile). In particular, Robinson (2011; Robinson, 2017) led me to understand we all possess creative potential, and that nurturing creativity in the workplace is essential. Robinson (2017) asserts that one of his aims is to 'encourage organisations to believe in their powers of innovation and to create the conditions where they will flourish' (p. xv). I wondered what opportunity participants had (or created) in their work based learning experience to be creative, both at an individual level and in ways that impacted on their organisation.

Critical reflection was the fourth concept chosen. As indicated earlier, a Deweyian (1938) view of experiential learning has critical reflection at its core. It is central to the programmes on which I teach. However, some of the literature referred to above sounds a note of caution around the continuing dominance of critical reflection; an external examiner once referred to it as an example of 'academic colonialism' when I spoke to him about an international learner who appeared to find critical reflection very difficult; and I anticipate that in the future I will explore alternative, international perspectives. Despite such perspectives, it had featured in the research participants' programme of study and so it seemed appropriate to include it in this research project: to what extent had participants used critical reflection during their studies and in the workplace? Did they consciously use it, identifying it as a specialist approach, or was it such a usual part of their approach that it was imperceptible? When it was identified, how was it used, with what outcomes? Fook (2010) offers a way to explore the connections between individual critical reflection and organisational impact, if one asks questions such as: 'What personal meaning is made by individuals, of the political conditions in their organisation? And how can the understanding of this be used to make changes in organisational practices?' (p. 50).

The research themes, and my particular perception of them and their relevance in my thesis, supports my wish to find out how it was for the participants; the extent to which

their experiences fitted (or did not) with the literature; what impact their studies had, and what implications there might be for work based learning provision.

Outline of thesis

Following this Act, Act 2 Backstory (Literature Review) considers literature relevant to an investigation into learners' experiences of work based learning and to the research themes. Literature pertaining to work based learning, the research themes and (briefly) Bourdieu's (1982/ 1987/ 1990) concepts of habitus, capital and field is included. This is followed by a review of the literature that helped me develop creative exploration and representation.

In Act 3 Planning the journey (Research Methodology) I explain my use of social constructionism and narrative research; provide a rationale for inclusion of play scripts; outline the data collection and analysis methods used; and consider issues of legitimacy and ethics.

Act 4 Exploration (Data Analysis) begins with a brief outline of the research participants and introduces the collection of play scripts. This is followed by analysis of the data according to the research themes.

In Act 5 Revelations (Findings) I give the responses to the research questions that arise from the data analysis, and consider what I have learned from the creation and inclusion of play scripts. The meaning of insights gained from this research in terms of my personal and professional practice concludes this Act.

I discuss these insights further in Act 6 Epilogue (Conclusion), where I also discuss the implications for practice arising from creative and arts-based approaches; the study's theoretical and methodological contribution; its limitations; and possible directions to take in future research.

Throughout the thesis, 'participant' refers to individuals who participated in my research. The word 'learner' has a broader meaning, sometimes referring to students on the particular programmes on which I teach, but also to those learning elsewhere and more generally. 'Student' is also used, and refers to individuals enrolled on a programme of study.

In this Act, I have outlined the focus and purpose of the research, considered the context and underpinning theory, and stated the research questions, approach and themes. In Act 2 I examine more closely the literature informing this investigation.

Act 2 Backstory (Literature Review)

Introduction

This Act considers literature relevant to an investigation into the impact of work based learning through a creative exploration of learners' experience. Definitions of work based learning relevant to this research are discussed, and reference made to the need for provision to meet the requirements of all parties in the tripartite relationship of learner, employer and higher education provider. The relevance of the international perspective, and of literature which prompts awareness of culturally specific influences on one's expectations and perceptions regarding provision and impact, is noted.

Consideration of impact as presented in the literature about work based learning is explored, and recognition made of the varying balance of emphases between individual and organisational levels. This leads to examination of relevant theory (notably Dewey's (1938) conception of learning and Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory of development) and its application and pertinence to understanding work based learning (provision, which it is noted, has been perceived, and remains for some, an 'outsider' field).

Literature about the concepts identified as research themes (Thirdspace, equality, creativity and critical reflection) is explored, together with consideration of their pertinence for analysis of work based learning. Additionally, habitus, capital and field are identified as concepts to aid analysis, particularly in relation to differences in participants' experience. Finally, literature relevant to creative research strategies is examined, indicating how it supported and offered inspiration for the approach I took in this investigation. This introductory recognition is developed further in Act 3.

The conclusion leads to confirmation of the research focus and research questions, to be followed in the next Act by consideration of research methodology.

Defining work based learning and its place within higher education

While Hager (2013) indicates how 'work based learning' can signify a wide range of relationships and contexts, Garnett (cited in Workman & Garnett, 2009) provides a definition relevant to this thesis:

> a learning process which focuses University level critical thinking upon work (paid or unpaid) in order to facilitate the recognition, acquisition and application of individual and collective knowledge, skills and abilities to achieve specific outcomes of significance to the learner, their work and the University.
>
> (p. 4)

This definition indicates the tripartite nature typical of work based learning in higher education in the United Kingdom, where learning outcomes not only need to meet higher education standards, but also be of significance to the learner and their work, and where a skill valued in university ('critical thinking') is applied to understanding and developing understanding of work. Garnett's definition presents individual and collective development (the latter, perhaps, being a reference to the organisation in which the individual learner works) as equal in significance.

Major's (2016) explanation of work based learning recognises the workplace both as 'the site of learning' (p. 18) and the subject studied; he too considers the connection between individuals' professional development and university accreditation, and the opportunity which collaboration with higher education offers organisations to develop projects, bring about change or, more generally, have an informed and qualified workforce. Major (2016) also recognises the benefit for the university, with such collaboration offering the opportunity to widen participation and increase student numbers and to strengthen connections between academic staff and the 'world outside the university' (p. 18), the implication, perhaps, being to increase the university's knowledge capital in directions relevant to that world.

Both definitions consider work based learning within the context of higher education in the United Kingdom, and serve to define in a general way the type of work based learning which participants in this research experienced, which, like Garnett's

(Workman & Garnett, 2009) and Major's (2016) definitions indicate, had a tripartite foundation. The courses participants took were created, developed and delivered by academic staff in the university. Learners took modules covering a range of work-related topics, such as communication skills, effective workplace teams, stress and stress management. In each module, they encountered and used relevant theories and concepts to analyse aspects of their workplace setting, their skills, approaches and performance, and identify areas for development. For their research methods module (called 'Designing practitioner research') they needed to identify an aspect of their practice or their organisation appropriate for investigation (such as an element that could be improved, or an innovation that could be introduced) and create a research proposal, with the intention of carrying it out as the main research project of their programme. The university programme they followed required application of growing knowledge and skills to work place projects; their work place understanding and experience offered a practice perspective on this knowledge. Personal and organisational impact was expected, through development of skills, aptitudes, and work place development, in ways possible to assess with criteria fitting the recognised higher education standards (Ofqual, 2015).

Several types of provision might fit these definitions, and be very different from the programmes the research participants here studied. For example, there is the type of work based learning commonly termed 'placement learning' in which the learner is often in full time higher education and undertakes a specific period of learning in the workplace as part of their degree, after which they return to full time study in the university. Other provision fitting those definitions includes that in which a corporate cohort studies en bloc, following a programme created to meet an organisation's or sector's specific needs and priorities alongside those of higher education, so that individual undergraduate or postgraduate awards can be achieved. The development of degree apprenticeship provision could indicate the need to extend the tripartite definition, to include professional bodies directly. For example, an objective in creation of a Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship programme might not only be to meet requirements of learner, organisation and higher education, but also to be recognised by professional bodies such as the Chartered Management Institute (CMI). These three examples differ from the provision the research participants here experienced. Here, all were in employment, as is expected for this type of course, but in a range of organisations, holding diverse roles. Major (2016) calls this the 'individual model' (p. 20). In my practice we define it as individually negotiated work based

learning, with learners negotiating with tutors a programme specifically relevant to their practice. None of them was part of a corporate cohort; all selected and registered for the programme independently.

The potential challenge for satisfying all parties in the tripartite relationship is indicated in Beckett's (2013) theoretical characterisation of work based learning, in which he notes that learning emerges through collaboration on issues of common interest. Thus, learning is activity-related and constructed with others. The requirement to meet higher education assessment requirements as well as meeting organisational demands suggests that all parties need flexibility and negotiation. Gibbs (2013b) considers how pragmatism 'engages with workplace knowledge and learning' (p. 165). He suggests that historically, pragmatism meant that meaning is what we take it to be; now, meaning is situated, developed at a particular time and in a location; its applicability can be tested over time and space. It does not depend on having knowledge of truth, but on having a level of confidence in practical judgements. Asking what is prudent for us to believe, rather than what is knowable, shifts the reference point from certainty to judgement. This has potential for raising conflict between the university and the outside world, and Gibbs (2013b) emphasises conversations as a way of connecting the university to the world of work, 'so that a new, more relevant learning community can evolve' (p. 169). Such conversations are ongoing, as we listen to and learn from others, and construct meaning in our work with others. The significance of others and the social arena in which work based learning takes place suggests that a social constructionist approach to work based learning research is appropriate.

The fact that there is ongoing discussion about defining work based learning suggests that one should not aim for a definition of universal applicability, but work constructively with the advantages and disadvantages such flexibility offers. On the one hand it might demonstrate the provision's continuing 'externality' to 'mainstream' higher education (e.g. it does not appear as a subject of study in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)), with potential for weak positioning in higher education institutions, where practice and opinions vary. For example, institutions differ in whether there is a distinct work based learning department, and if there is one, what its place, purpose and capacity are within the organisation's structure. On the other hand, flexibility facilitates innovation (as with the degree apprenticeship programmes) and collaboration between higher education and organisations. It can also accommodate (through, for example,

recognition of prior learning and reflective assessment) informal learning that goes on in the workplace and more generally. Reviewing the debate regarding definitions leads me to accept in this thesis the generic definition of the tripartite relationship, as presented by Garnett (Workman & Garnett, 2009) and Major (2016), and specifically, Major's (2016) outline of the 'individual model' (p. 20).

There were three programmes studied by research participants. One participant (Thomas) had taken an MBA, gaining substantial recognition of prior certificated learning and choosing modules and assignment focuses which matched the requirements for this award, alongside meeting his own and his organisation's needs. Lance had taken an MSc, which facilitated relevance of study and assessment to his job as a manager of technology within a university's information service. The other four participants had taken an MA. In all cases, the programmes were work based, flexible, for distance learners, with focus negotiated between learner and module tutor. Despite the flexibility of work based learning generally, and the programmes taken by participants in particular, it is important to recognise that the discussion so far in this thesis has related to certain cultural contexts, and not others.

The definitions considered above, which recognise individual learning as significant, fit with 'Anglo' cultural contexts as suggested by Millington (2011, p. 291), in which organisations tend to have an inclusive approach regarding employees and self-development planning, within an 'open, participant-oriented work climate' (p. 291), which facilitates self-direction. In comparison, definitions which give weight to organisational learning might fit with 'Confucian Asian' societies (p. 291), where continuous learning is more likely to be manager-led. Millington (2011) also compares the high individualism of Anglo cultures, where 'work goals' such as 'personal time, freedom and challenge' (p. 303) are valued, with the 'higher levels of collectivism in Confucian Asian societies' where learning and development are focused on the needs of the group rather than the individual (p. 303). Metz (2013) draws on Afro-communitarianism to offer a moral perspective on work based learning, asking if it makes learners better people and promotes justice. Here, identity involves a shared way of life and shared responsibility for others' practical and emotional quality of life. An Islamic perspective on work based learning, Akdere and Salem (2013) suggest, is also mindful of communal learning, valuing learning that benefits one's society as well as oneself.

The socio-cultural context of work based learning influences which definition(s) is pertinent, appropriate approaches to take, and anticipated impact. Millington (2011), Metz (2013) and Akdere and Salem (2013) raise awareness of how one's assumptions and practices might be culturally specific. Their work relates to the sphere beyond the individual, and even beyond the learner's workplace, prompting deeper consideration of physical, cognitive and moral development, and recognition that the research approach taken here is situated within the 'Anglo' cultures identified by Millington (2011). These international perspectives are relevant when considering dissemination outside the United Kingdom, and also within it, as they could facilitate recognition of learners' approaches and perceptions that differ from the predominant individual focus.

Before exploring the literature relating to the research themes, the ways in which work based learning impact and theory are considered in the literature will be reviewed.

Impact and theories relevant to work based learning

In my research, I used the term 'impact' to mean personal, professional, organisational or societal change experienced by or effected by research participants that appeared (from their narrative) to relate to their studies. I recognise that change and development can happen without any course of study being involved: people learn from experience (Dewey, 1938). However, I wished to gather data about participants' experience relating to their studies, and the consequent change they perceived. By 'personal impact' I was thinking of changes such as growth in self-confidence, greater awareness of, and application of approaches to take in one's work, greater understanding of the work environment. 'Professional impact' might include promotion or career advancement, new approaches to practice, involvement in new roles and responsibilities. 'Organisational impact' could arise from effecting change in organisational practice or strategy. 'Societal impact' widens the focus to consider issues beyond the individual and organisation, to, for example, thoughts and actions relating to how society functions. In selecting these aspects of impact, I was influenced by the literature, as examined in this Act. In Acts 4, 5 6, these four aspects are referred to as I consider the data. Additionally, and significantly, the collection of play scripts (Appendix 1) portrays the impressions I gained of what aspects of impact were strong for individual participants. My use of the term 'impact' in the way summarised here, and the individualised treatment I give it, is about impact in practice primarily; it is about changes in individuals' behaviour, actions, perspectives and understandings. This

approach leads to the emergence of understanding and awareness of impact that differs in some ways from dominant understandings, which might be seen as more strongly focused on performance in the workplace. However, those dominant perceptions and understandings provide a strong foundation, from which I developed my investigation, and remain significant for the continuing relevance of work based learning, and so are now examined.

In contrast to my perception and treatment of impact, as set out above, a dominant meaning of the term in higher education largely means having papers published in high quality journals. The use of this specific meaning sometimes seems overwhelming, and the view that the concept has a wider meaning in teaching and learning generally, and within work based learning particularly, appears comparatively weak. I suggest that using the term specifically in relation to publication facilitates measurement of something complex (the professional market value of one's thoughts and arguments, as articulated in published work), irrespective of whether this is the most pertinent aspect to measure. Furthermore, the equation of impact with publication success implies an acceptance that some individuals (those with more articles published in high quality journals) will be superior to others (those with fewer articles, and these published in journals of lower quality).

In this research, I intended that my investigation of impact fitted with my valuing of equality, and a resistance to hierarchical perception of impact. Measuring types of impact other than publication record might be complex for any discipline; for work based learning impact this is certainly the case, relating to the competing perspectives on work based learning, particularly individual versus organisational development and impact. In this thesis, an open approach to recognising impact was taken, allowing exploration of the mix of elements influencing participants' experiences and perceptions. With a social constructionist perspective, I wished to analyse these experiences and perceptions, taking into account the role of others and other contextual factors.

The study recognises the dominant understandings of impact within the work based learning literature and in practice. In these understandings, there is a belief that employees' continuous development of capabilities is beneficial to the individuals and their organisation, and that there are benefits of achieving developments through experiential learning, and informal learning, which might better support strategic

organisational change than a more directive approach to career development (Larsen, Schramm-Nielsen & Stensaker, 2011). London (2011), in his overview of lifelong learning, identifies economic, technological and cultural changes, along with the increasing number of older workers, as factors that make experiential learning important.

Although Hager (2011) suggests that early *theories* of work based learning tended to focus on the individual, perhaps the early *literature* focused largely on organisational learning, with Raelin (2008) considering collaborative work based learning, and practitioners at Middlesex University anticipating considerable organisational involvement (Garnett, Costley & Workman, 2009). Some of the more recent literature has a similar focus. Major (2016) considers case studies of organisational learning, and others, such as Garnett, Abraham and Abraham (2016) show how the provision can enhance the intellectual capital of organisations. Socio-political context might explain (or at least correlate with) a focus on organisational learning: in the early years of the provision, a key concern was to establish work based learning as a legitimate element of higher education provision; the United Kingdom current context includes maintenance and growth of productivity in the wake of the economic recession and in anticipation of leaving the European Union (of which anticipated impact is currently uncertain). Such concerns relate to the much-strengthened focus on apprenticeship through the implementation of the apprenticeship levy and establishment of the degree apprentice route to higher education achievement (Department for Education, 2018). However, Wall (2015) highlights the individualistic nature of much of the focus on work based learning to date, and how such a perspective might preclude learning for a larger grouping, or constrain a wish for impact beyond the individual. My own exploration prior to my current research concurs with this point, as indicated in my paper (Appendix 2/ Scott, 2017) where I suggest that learning in and by the organisation did not necessarily accompany personal and professional development.

Critten (2016a; 2016b) reviews his practice and that of the sector, arguing that the focus of work based learning has remained the individual learner, with little attention paid to the workplace context for learning. He questions the extent to which we actually measure 'impact' of work based learning, even though it is considered important to do so. He considers his attempts to link individual and organisational practice in evaluating the impact of learning, noticing a disconnect between workers' growing knowledge and aptitude as they engage in work based learning, and the organisation's take-up of this

enriched resource. Lack of take-up might be due to the difficulties in moving beyond a traditional mechanistic approach to organisational change. However, change can come about through articulation. There seems resonance with Fook (2010) who says that individual impact can support organisational impact.

Critten (2016a), drawing on concepts such as communities of practice, and tacit knowledge, recognises the significance of articulation and action for bringing about change. He calls the connection learners make between their learning from a work based learning programme and effecting impact on colleagues and the organisation 'learning reach' (Critten 2016a, p. 32). He suggests that of the strategies he developed in his practice as approaches for students to consider, all might have merit; all might fail - as achieving impact on organisations from individual learning requires tripartite (individual, organisation and higher education institute or awarding body) responsibility for facilitating this. Critten (2016a) suggests that higher education institutions might have been too heavily focused on academic achievement (thus the individual), with little attention in comparison paid to organisational consequences. Critten's (2016a; 2016b) work suggests how the academic could facilitate impact, through working appropriately with organisations as well as individual learners, and although his approaches were not utilized in the programme considered here, they might offer suggestions to inform future practice development.

In a broader consideration of the term, Wall (2017) considers the developing interpretation of 'impact' in the 'impact agenda' that is now a 'global phenomenon with great expectations for "transformational" impacts in the wider world' (p. 90). He suggests this perception of impact might herald an unpredictability that is perhaps unwelcome. He also notes the contrastingly narrow conceptualisations of the term used by research funding councils and governments, where he detects a weakness in their connection of research with practice. While this connection is of significance in work based learning, Wall recognizes that such connection might also be considered localized and specific, with limited societal reach. He suggests it is appropriate to question the meaning of the term impact from a number of angles, including theoretical positions, and managing impact in practice. This leads him to raise a number of prompts to encourage a critical stance, such as considering the role of mental health or mental outlook in stimulating deep impact, the contribution creativity and curiosity might play, and how we develop open spaces for communication rather than narrowly directive practices. Such ideas further indicate the potential complexity of examining impact, and

the possibility for innovative practice to emerge from so doing. They widened my awareness of what form impact might take, including, for example, the role of creativity in impact, and the value of curiosity and ideas, irrespective of demonstrable change in performance. From this reading I also took support for a social constructionist position, focused on the participants' perceptions and interpretations of their work based learning experience.

In considering how the nature and extent of impact varied with individual work based learners, I suggested (in my paper) that synthesis of organisational, personal and professional factors might be complex. One might expect a learner with considerable professional responsibility to find it easier to apply their learning to their own practice and to their organisation, than a learner in a lower status organisational role. However, learners' impact, whatever their position in an organisation, might be strengthened if their own line manager assumes 'ignorance', so facilitating the learner's autonomy, and allowing her or him the space to apply their learning to the organisation. I also considered learners' expectations regarding the likelihood of organisational impact, and motivation to exert an impact, drawing on Bourdieu's (1997/2000) work to suggest that motivation could be higher when one's capital fits well with the field.

Such discussion of impact demonstrates developments in perception and application of Dewey's conception of learning, to which the theoretical foundation of work based learning can be traced. Dewey (1938) saw learning as the result of knowledge that is created inside a learner's own head, rather than being "put" there by an educator. For Dewey, experience is fundamental to human learning. Every idea, value and social institution originates in the practical circumstances of human life. He suggests that education involves the construction and re-organisation of experiences that add meaning and increase one's ability to direct the course of subsequent experiences. The way one acquires meaning, and the meaning that one gains, influence the nature of subsequent experiences. Dewey identifies the reflective process as a way to support development of understanding. The assumption that experience is integral to knowledge and skill development underpins most current work based learning provision in Anglo cultures. However, a critical perspective indicates that strategies, varying in nature and in instigator, (for example, Critten (2016 a, 2016 b) and Fook (2010)) need to be implemented if impact at both individual and organisational level is intended. Dewey's (1938) theory offers a foundation for deep analysis of learners' experience in relation to impact. It was interesting to find out about how individuals

implemented ideas arising from their studies, what they learned from this, how they learned it, and how that influenced further experiences.

Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory of development recognises the interconnections between learning and development, with 'learning [being] the process whereby development occurs' (p. 197). Learning from experience shapes what and how one's development can or might occur. Kolb perceives development arising as individuals move from dependence to self-actualisation, independence and self-direction. Of the three maturation stages he perceives, the third, integration, is when self-direction adapts to societal circumstances, which Kolb (2015) believes should be achieved actively, so that one sees how to shape one's experiences, rather than just accept what happens.

From this underlying foundation has emerged transdisciplinary recognition and use of work based learning, with different theoretical perspectives developing within different disciplines (Costley & Gibbs, 2009). Hager's (2011) charting of theory development, influenced by perceptions and assumptions, indicates how understandings of work based learning might vary, which Nottingham (2017) notes in her exploration of current pedagogical developments. This diversity influences debate over justification for work based learning as a field of study, which began when the notion of degree-level learning taking place outside a higher education institution, in the workplace (Costley, 2011) was unfamiliar. While remaining an 'outsider' field for many higher education institutions, the increased focus on employability through the Teaching Excellence Framework might herald further change. Nottingham (2017) suggests current and imminent developments in understanding might arise through work based learning's 'hybridity' (p. 136) which facilitates recognition of professional competence synthesised with the higher education qualification, and also specialist alignment. My own practice concurs with this argument, particularly in relation to the degree apprentices my department teaches, as their assessment is three-fold, using higher education assessment criteria, and also those of two professional bodies, in addition to the necessity for the provision to meet organisations' requirements.

Both Dewey (1938) and Kolb (2015) consider the interplay of individual and external factors; such a focus is core to current theoretical and practitioner considerations of work based learning, and their ideas inform the thesis perspective and social constructionist position: the interest was not just in participants' study experiences, but in how and why these were integrated (or not) into work practices and further learning.

Nottingham and Akinleye's (2013) review of professional artefacts undergraduate work based learning students created as part of their final module assessment indicates how work based learning provision might implement the Deweyian idea of continuous learning, with the artefact a way to synthesise knowledge from studies with work based activities and knowledge. This provision resonates with that undertaken by the participants in my research, whose final research project required application of knowledge from their course to investigation of a work issue, with the aim of addressing problems identified, strengthening practice, and enriching knowledge. The artefact (or, in the case of my research, participants' research) demonstrates that such learning can be ascribed with higher education measures, while addressing priorities external to the institution, integrating learning from both contexts. A social constructionist perspective facilitates recognition of the importance of others in such demonstrations of applied learning, which influences further experience. Others perhaps contribute to one's focus and understanding through what Gibbs (2013b) terms 'edifying … conversations (p. 172). Gibbs (2013b) suggests these conversations aid tolerance, understanding and meaning. The aim is not to arrive at a correct and final answer, but at a heightened sense of sensitivity and understanding of others, and through understanding them, to newly understand ourselves. Meaning of particular knowledge is pertinent while it proves to be useful in enabling us to understand and cope in and with our environment. It gains authority from being developed in the world of activity and in being validated in context. Its function is to resolve problems that occur in our everydayness. There is no claim to persist beyond its practical function. We expect it to be superseded by more beneficial knowledge. It is codified in processes, in terms of how it works and its usefulness. It is relevant to explore meaning changes in participants' stories: their extent and nature (or absence), causes (or triggers) and consequences.

Within a community of practice there will be negotiation of meanings of new forms of knowledge or the validation of generally accepted findings. To participate in 'edifying conversations', one has to understand other language games so as to interpret meaning from one domain to another and also to challenge interpretations of the notion of knowledge contained. Ability to learn relates to an ability to interpret, to give meaning to something in order for it to become knowledge. For learners and tutors, an ability to transcend their immediate contextual interpretation of knowledge in ways that challenge the accepted interrogation has potential to create new knowledge, new ways of being useful within the context of action. This fits with expectations or hopes that are

held in the provision providing the focus for this thesis; finding the extent to which participants demonstrate challenging ideas and action was relevant. However, I recognise that concepts such as 'edifying … conversations' (Gibbs, 2013b, p. 172) and communities of practice can work to support conservation of currently dominant practice and perceptions. As Costley and Gibbs (2009) found for learners, and Critten (2016a; 2016b) suggests regarding his own practice, one might develop considerably challenging perspectives on practice, yet find it difficult to effect consequent change in practice, due to a number of reasons, such as one's place in the organisational structure; the organisational climate (embracing of new perspectives, or wary of them); the degree of self-efficacy. Such thinking led me to be cautious in my expectations about impact at organisational and societal level.

Brinkmann and Tanggaard's (2013) application of Dewey's ideas to work based learning offers a further lens through which to view Nottingham and Akinleye's (2013) professional artefacts and participants' research projects. They suggest limitations might prevail when one's epistemology is 'of the eye' (p. 148), or one uses a 'spectator theory of knowledge' (p. 149), which Dewey suggested arose from the socio-economic political division between those who 'knew' and those who worked and needed instruction as they did not know. Dewey's position was that there are different kinds of knowledge, and that something should only be counted as knowledge if it 'enables us to make a fruitful difference to human experience' (p. 150). Seeing with the eye is part of analysis, concerned with the formulation of ideas, but to count as knowledge these ideas must be put into practice (as with Nottingham and Akinleye's (2013) professional artefacts and participants' research projects). Brinkmann's and Tanggaard's (2013) phrase 'epistemology of the hand' (p. 147) arises from following through Dewey's questioning of data as something we observe, something which is given, and his imagining instead that we see data as 'taken' (p. 151); we come to know through our handling of the world. Brinkmann and Tanggaard (2013) suggest both epistemologies are pertinent to understanding: one can learn from observing or listening, but this learning has an active element, it is part of activity. Unstated by Brinkmann and Tanggaard (2013), it would seem to be important that a critical view of understanding arising from both epistemologies is needed when seeking to break out of perpetuation of routine, or when confronted by different world-handling. Such a critical view is relevant to this research, in analysis of learners' experiences and perceptions.

Dewey (1938) provides the base for this research. The investigation is informed by social constructionism, which facilitates estimation of the significance of cultural, social and organisational factors that Hager (2011) suggests are strongly featured in some theories and concepts of work based learning such as Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation, whereby individuals learn workplace skills through increasingly significant participation in particular activities. Critics might suggest such thinking gives limited recognition to individual differences regarding approach and impact, and to variation in workplace affordances such as learning climate, work processes and resources. While community of practice is a concept that aided analysis of participants' experiences, these concerns highlighted the importance of doing so critically, aided by incorporation of other concepts, in particular those indicated by the research themes.

In summary, the literature suggests that impact in work based learning varies in nature and extent, might be personal, professional, organisational, or societal, and can be perceived and articulated differently depending on theoretical perspective. These ideas about impact informed my expectations and perceptions, and analysis of the data in this study, alongside a desire to reach an understanding of 'impact' from the individual research participant's perspective. I chose research themes which would facilitate analysis of participants' experience of work based learning, and the literature pertaining to these concepts is now considered.

Research themes in detail

Thirdspace

I first encountered the concept of Thirdspace during my doctoral studies (as outlined in my Learning profile), finding Soja's (1996) conception of a 'constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances and meanings' (p. 2) exciting, troubling, recognizable. While it prompted a critical perspective on my own undergraduate studies many years ago, it also directed attention to participants' experiences, considering, for example, to what extent the marginal aspect of Thirdspace was felt; whether participants experienced uncertainty and/or opportunity. I believed the metaphor of Thirdspace and its concomitant concepts of Firstspace and Secondspace were useful in understanding participants' study experiences.

Soja's (1996) spatial metaphor conveys a conception that might challenge a purely facts-based approach to understanding. Through use of imagination, it opens up alternative ways of thinking; of perceiving our experiences; of imagining alternatives, and future possibilities. Soja (1996) perceives a constantly changing mix of experiences, of how they appear to us, and of the ideas and understandings we gain from them. Soja (1996) warns against letting tradition constrain our ideas, or favouring a contemporary approach on the assumption that relevance is more important than depth. Thirdspace is integral to an alternative approach, 'creatively open to redefinition and expansion in new directions' (p. 2). It is a space 'where all places are capable of being seen from every angle, … a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood' (p. 56). Soja (1996) envisages Thirdspace as lying between Firstspace: 'the "real" material world', and Secondspace: an interpretation of that reality 'through "imagined" representations of spatiality' (p. 6). He articulates Thirdspace's wide applicability, referring, for example, to its relevance to race, class and gender.

This encompassing view unfolds as he considers the work of others and the richness of their ability to think in this open way, challenging the 'taken-for-granted'. For example, his use of 'margin' when considering bel hooks's work (p. 100) has strong resonance with the uncertainty and discomfort he suggests is endemic in Thirdspace: one cannot return to the life one has had and see it and live it in the same way, because one has left it, albeit 'temporarily', and yet one is not sure what exactly will be different; there is uncertainty.

Soja (1996) considers Bhaba's 'Third Space', referring to Bhaba's 'postcolonial project' (p. 139). Bhaba (1994) focuses on the boundaries and crossing points – between voices, between cultures, perceiving them as 'points from which something begins its presencing' (Heidegger, cited in Bhaba 1994, p. 1), perceiving the possible articulation of culture's hybridity through an '*inter*national' culture, rather than perceiving only the diversity of cultures (because they are assumed to be unchanging and discrete). "Inter" is the 'cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space': Bhaba's Third Space (p. 56).

The concept resonated strongly, prompting new insights to my undergraduate studies. I saw that I had felt uncomfortable when 'inbetween', never feeling I was in the right place, doubting I should have been given a place on that particular course, and so working very hard academically, with little thought to Secondspace, or to enjoyment of

the openness of that time in my life as Thirdspace. In comparison, I was unsure how relevant the concept would be in my research, because participants were mature, in employment, studying a programme relating to their work (whereas I had gone straight from school, residing at the university, not in employment, and studying a subject (anthropology) that was (ironically) somewhat removed from the familiar). However, although it was possible that participants' connection between work and study was so smooth there was little opportunity to encounter Thirdspace, that concept had again resonated with me as I considered my doctoral studies: like the participants I was studying part-time while in full employment a programme of relevance to my work, and yet I had encountered Thirdspace aspects, and perceived this time in my life as one for exploration and opportunity to experiment with new ideas. Therefore, the concept did appear pertinent; one's period of time as a learner on negotiated work based learning could be considered Thirdspace. Although the programme is work based, the act of studying work distances one from one's work, and so work becomes one's Firstspace. One's studies prompt new perspectives and understandings – sometimes of things one has previously taken for granted. It can be viewed as a space for opportunity – development, creativity, innovation – and challenge.

Considering learners' studies as Thirdspace led to interest in whether this period was a creative phase and space, or something so uncomfortable they wished to get through it quickly; in whether they tried out new approaches that might otherwise not occur to them or seem risky or resource heavy; in their reaction to fresh perspectives; their thoughts on Secondspace, and in whether/how their everyday practice (Firstspace) was altered.

Individuals might embrace Thirdspace experiences differently for reasons that could be perceived and analysed in relation to different concepts (such as personality; learning style preferences; habitus, capital and field; socio-political considerations). While Thirdspace's potential connection with opportunity and openness could be considered alongside creativity, Soja (1996) and Bhaba (1994) articulate strongly the political aspect of the concept, indicating how it might be a concept to support exploration of marginalised communities. Such thinking prompted sensitivity to the positions of participants, both in their studies and in their workplace. Thirdspace might facilitate greater critical exploration of participants' experience. The narrative research approach taken (see Act 3) facilitated this, allowing one to get to the 'heart of social consciousness' (Clough 2002, p.8), thus strengthening the critical perspective.

It is possible to perceive the relevance of Thirdspace to arguments expressed even when the term is not used. For example, Costley and Gibbs's (2009) consideration of work based learners carrying out research in their workplace could perhaps be seen as a specific example of Thirdspace: "the growth within students is often an identity change where their world view is different after the experience of the research modules than it was before and acts as a trajectory for their future way of seeing the world" (p. 217). Their consideration of such learners links to Rancière (1987/1991): the extent to which the learner is free to seek outcomes from their studies, unencumbered by political, social or economic pressures might depend on the presence and nature of equality. Consideration of Thirdspace in this thesis opens opportunities to enrich one's approach as a tutor, and supports development of a more informed, critical understanding of learners' experience of work based learning. The concept fits well with Dewey's (1938) conception of learning: movement from Firstspace to Thirdspace; anticipation of Secondspace, which then informs future creations of Thirdspace could be a metaphor for how experience leads to knowledge which informs future experiences.

Contemplation of my own experience of Thirdspace, in addition to the literature, made me aware that individuals would vary in their perceptions of, approaches to and experiences of Thirdspace. While this might be explained in part through personality, different contexts and prior experiences, I sought other theories that might support understanding of such variation and identified Bourdieu's (1997/ 2000) concepts of field, habitus and capital as relevant, to be discussed below. Such variations could connect to issues of equality, and equality is the next theme to be considered.

Equality

Interest in equality was inspired by Rancière (1987/1991), who articulates his assumption of equality of intelligence not just in relation to education but to social order, through his consideration of the work of Jacotot, a late 18th century teacher whose Flemish-speaking pupils learned French not through his explication, but through their autonomous use of a bilingual edition of *Telemaque.* As indicated in my Learning profile, encountering Rancière's (1987/1991) work raised self-awareness of my values, and as I say there, I realised his assumption of equality was something I shared. In this research, a valuing of equality and democratic action led to interest in how learners perceived and experienced equality.

Rancière's (1987/1991) concepts of 'citizen' (who acts within the existing social order) and 'reasonable man' (who, while doing so, recognises his equality with others, and the equality of all) (p. 91) facilitate understanding of how an individual might perceive and understand their role and potential organisational contribution without disrupting the social order: power differences are realised, and operational inequality accepted from a position of equality. (The term 'reasonable man' (Rancière, 1987/1991, p. 91) might be considered sexist, three decades after Rancière's publication and its translation into English. I considered whether to amend to a gender neutral alternative and chose to maintain the original term as it seemed appropriate to use the terms of the author (and contemporaneous translator), rather than imposing an alternative which might be culturally preferred today.) Work based learners vary in the level of organisational impact they might have, and work based learning has varying impact on individual learners and groups of learners. In considering how more 'revolutionary' impact might be achieved, Wall's (2016) critical angle on the work based learning literature is relevant. He expresses a wish to move beyond the 'immediate and the practical' (p. 6) to examine wider and deeper power structures and recognise the disruptive potential of this for workplace inequality or social injustice. My expectation was that such disruption was unlikely to have occurred for participants, but Wall (2016) prompts openness to its presence. If disruption did occur, the long-term persistence of its effects would vary, but even short-term disequilibrium could have strong impact.

A Rancière-influenced stance might acknowledge social inequality while maintaining an assumption of equality (the reasonable man's stance), and seek ways to ameliorate material disbenefit (as the citizen). Such a stance values each person's rights to operate in, contribute to, and benefit from their learning and their work context, while at the same time avoiding confrontation through overturning of the social order. A critical theorist stance would perhaps view such a position as neo-liberal, due to the acceptance (maybe reluctantly) of the social order rather than seeking change (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). This argument is acknowledged, but the underlying stance adopted in this thesis is to follow Rancière (1987/1991) in accepting that one's emancipation is constrained outside of social revolution; that it nevertheless should be sought; that internal, or cognitive, equality can exist and is of significance in the face of material inequality.

Thus, in this thesis, rather than anticipating that the impact of work based learning involved revolution, the interest was in the extent to which equality operated at any/ all stages of a participant's experience, both in the workplace and outside; in its visibility in participants' decision-making, actions, perceptions and interpretations; in its presence and nature in the workplace; in whether any changes in equality related to the participant's participation in work based learning. Participants' views of equality were of interest also.

The intention to explore learners' views from a social constructionist perspective, and to take a creative approach in so doing, offered the possibility to gain understanding beyond what actually occurred, because I wished to gather data about participants' ideas and imagined futures too. Analysing their experiences in the light of equality offered the potential to investigate deep aspects of work based learning, as alluded to by, for example Gibbs (2013a) who sees work as a core component of one's being. Garnett (2013) also indicates the possible depth, suggesting that studying the relationship between work and learning goes more deeply into consideration of 'our being' (p. v) than is possible with performative considerations only, and is 'fundamental to our increased understanding of the human condition' (p. vi). Such views suggest that research into work based learning could lead to deeper understandings (or questions) than those commonly thought of (such as productivity, or other aspects of performance). While this position relates to all the research themes, equality is perhaps the one where it is most directly relevant, especially when one considers the reasonable man and the citizen.

Creativity

Imagined futures provide a connection to creativity. I wished to not only take a creative approach in my exploration of learners' experience of work based learning, but also to explore the extent to which creativity was a constituent element of this experience for learners. Prior to this research, my perception was that creativity is fairly solitary: we vary individually regarding how creative we are; others are involved, but in a relatively passive way. I found it difficult to connect creative actions I might take outside of my practice with possible behaviours I could adopt in work. Yet Robinson (2017) perceives responsibility for cultivation of creativity to lie with individuals, organisations and education, and not just the individual. New ideas can help transform our lives, can bring about revolution and 'new ways of seeing that … [shatter] old certainties' (p. xvi).

Robinson (2017) refers to imagination, creativity and innovation, with all three concepts of relevance to work based learning: imagination ('bringing to mind things which are not present to our senses' (p. 2)) is required for creativity ('developing original ideas that have value' (p. 2)), which might be followed by a third stage, innovation ('putting new ideas into action' (p. 2)).

Robinson (2006;2011; 2017) writes and speaks extensively about creativity, and led a national commission on creativity, education and the economy for the United Kingdom government (Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Great Britain. National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, & Great Britain. Department for Education and Employment,1999). His perspective and arguments have informed my developing ideas and understandings of creativity, although I acknowledge there are critics who disagree with them. For example, Kirby (2013), a deputy head teacher, argues in his blog post that Robinson's ideas are impractical and undesirable, and that there are certain things, such as numeracy and literacy, and academic achievement, that are needed for individuals to have the possibility of social mobility and economic stability or success, and it is important for schools to give more time to these aspects of education, rather than losing it so more time can be given to development of creativity. It is possible that, as Kirby (2013) argues, Robinson does not have a full awareness of creativity in schools, due to his lack of current experience as a schoolteacher. However, as a champion, perhaps one promulgates one particular perspective. Consequently, it is necessary for practitioners to refrain from uncritical application of one's ideas.

I accept this, while recognising that Robinson's work opened up my awareness and understanding of creativity so that it became more inclusive, and I could feel it reasonable to encounter examples of creativity far more widely than I had previously assumed. I also came to recognise the relevance of creativity in the workplace far more strongly. For example, Robinson's (2011; 2017) consideration of creative leaders and creative organisations offers prompts for perspectives on work based learning, facilitating perceptual synthesis of study and work place impact. In terms of this study, it also offers support for a social constructionist perspective, facilitating investigation of the triggers, approaches and outcomes of creative leadership, and the extent to which creativity is perceived or encouraged in an organisation.

My inclusion of creativity as a research theme was supported by further reading, such as the work of Pässilä, Owens and Pulkki (2016). Creativity is at the core of their attempts to offer spaces for diverse views on an organisational, social or political issue to be heard and engaged with equally. Their self-contained workshops refer to challenges in attempting to use collaborative creativity to address organisational priorities; the workshops might also prompt recognition of learning in unplanned ways unexpected things, perhaps leading to organisational impact. Reflecting on longer use of such interventions, Adams and Owens (2016) consider how the collaborative creativity they sought to establish involved engagement with competing understandings and aspirations. The creative space allowed 'voices to be heard' (p. 131) democratically.

In addition to an interest in participants' creativity - in their learning, their application of their learning, in their perceptions of themselves, their workplace, and others - I was interested in literature which considered creativity in relation to research approach and specifically in how learning might be facilitated. For example, Poole (2017) argues that current contemporary understandings of "impact" fail practice and research by obscuring the space for reflexive criticality that is crucial for an individual or organisation to flourish. He argues for a creative approach to researching impact, to aid a turning from its managerial and mechanical treatment. This suggested that taking a creative approach in my research, one that was open, but also mindful of the research themes, might support a creative awareness and treatment of impact.

Pässilä, Owens, Kuusipalo-Määtä, Oikarinen & Benmergui (2017) are interested in learners' creation of new insights, and the extent to which learning is actually involved in such creations. They argue that creative approaches, which they term 'Beyond Text' (p. 160) can be used to facilitate 'turning to learning mode' (p. 159), suggesting that, for example, dramatizing characters within a story resonant to the organisational situation, can stimulate reflexivity and encourage 'collective "Eureka" moments' (p. 160). This is an example of how some of the literature considering work based learning and creativity focuses more on use of creative techniques by the researcher or facilitator. The participants in the research for this thesis were not exposed to specific creative techniques in the teaching they encountered beyond tutors' general repertoires, so it was not anticipated that either Pässilä et al's (2017) approach, or Pässilä et al's (2016) approach (or similar) would be referred to by participants. (However, this literature informed my views on how to take a creative approach in the research; this aspect is discussed later.)

Similarly, while the participants were not exposed to any attempts specifically designed to foster collective creativity, Adams and Owen's (2016) work prompts one to consider the evidence for collective creativity in the participants' workplace, and its connection to their work based learning. This point seems to connect with the role of the manager in facilitating learners' impact: perhaps the 'ignorant' manager I perceive in my paper simultaneously opens the space for both individual and collective creativity.

Page et al (2014) offer a further example of how creative approaches (in this case visual inquiry, poetic writing and social dreaming) can connect with participants' lived experiences, where they can contemplate and energise equality and diversity practice, free from their usual organisational constraints. The use of 'liminal space' (p. 582) in which status is immaterial, and there is doubt, and unfamiliarity, but also the potential for transformative practice, resonates with ideas relating to Thirdspace. Page et al's (2014) work also indicates how it might be difficult to contemplate the role of citizen and reasonable man simultaneously (perhaps when one is overwhelmed by one's duties within the existing social order). However, their work indicates the potential for creative approaches to research to engage participants and effect action. Later in this Act I will consider briefly how this literature, and other texts relating to the creativity of the researcher informed my research approach, and will explore it further in Act 3.

Critical reflection

Early writings about work based learning, often referencing Dewey's belief in the essential connection between conceptual knowledge and practice, or Schon's reflection-in and on-action (Raelin, 2008), some using Kolb's learning cycle or Mezirow's presentation of a questioning attitude, suggest critical reflection is key to personal and organisational change (Raelin, 2008). Such writing led me to think that the concept should be included as a research theme, as it is recognised in the literature as a constituent of work based learning, despite arguments for other ways of thinking. It also featured in the participants' studies. Wall (2016), for example, suggests it addresses the 'immediate and the practical' (p. 6) rather than examining wider and deeper power structures, and Kilminster, Zukas, Bradbury and Frost (2010) urge for it to be used for social and organisational change. However, critical reflection continues to be considered a core component of work based learning. For example, Helyer (2015b) considers the looking forward as well as backward element of reflection, suggesting this

'enables practitioners to change in action, in the present moment, fully utilising observations, articulations and theorisation to strategically transform and re-conceptualize practice' (p. 24). A Deweyian stance positions reflection as a core component of experience-informed learning.

Kilminster et al (2010) note the diversity of authors who have focused on the importance of reflection, critical thinking about actions for development of work, and changing ideas about reflective practice; they identify competing considerations, such as professional autonomy and professional accountability; personal accountability and control; different perceptions of learning. 'Radical' (p. 2) critical reflection can lead to provocative insights about custom and practice, so prompting challenge and resistance. Kilminster et al (2010) perceive this to be why the dominant use of reflection became individually focused, and why there was far less emphasis on 'context, power dynamics or ideological challenge' (p. 3). They argue that rather than a 'tool for critical praxis … it becomes a tool for control and orthodoxy' (p. 3).

This resonates with my practice: philosophically I feel challenged and excited by the thought of critically reflective exploration; I value problematisation, unearthing unanticipated insights and perspectives, bringing to light my assumptions and beliefs, triggering ideas about individual and organisational change. However, developments I deem to be needed must be acceptable in the organisation. My experience of critically reflective practice is individual, with the main impact being on my own approach, with little organisational impact. This tension between emancipation and control (Kilminster et al, 2010) seems pertinent to me individually and also to my practice, particularly in my facilitation of learners' critical reflection. It is also pertinent to a social constructionist approach to research, with which the nature, extent and influence on impact of critical reflection for participants can be examined in context, and might address concerns expressed by Frost (2010) for example, who decries the 'idealist' (p. 15) approach to reflection, with which professionals appear to be able to develop as they see best, irrespective of the socio-political context. Boud (2010) also refers to the context within which reflection operates, acknowledging the need to consider the group or team as well as focusing on individual reflection, to develop 'new ways of thinking about reflection that recognise the complexities and the relational qualities of practice' (p. 36), and which might move on from the 'Deweyian' (p. 36) approaches to those more sociologically oriented approaches, and to reflexivity.

Fook (2010) indicates a way forward for the frustrated critically reflective practitioner, suggesting that the integration of personal and social experiences requires personal experience to be recognised in effecting consequent social change, and that 'personal' and 'social' are 'simply different perspectives' (p. 50), rather than disconnected sources. This seems to imply that with patience and ability to negotiate in the 'social' from a 'personal' position, change might arise, and perhaps is what one needs to consider when seeking to effect change arising from one's critical reflection.

Such arguments indicated that critical reflection would be a relevant theme with which to analyse participants' experiences and gain some understanding of the nature and extent of impact. Although an international perspective might suggest that concepts other than critical reflection, perhaps unfamiliar to western cultures, were more pertinent to another culture, and might also offer a frame for others to explore (Wall, 2015), it was not expected in this research that this would be the case. This was because most research participants were from the United Kingdom and, it seemed, accepted critical reflection as a part of their studies. For one participant who was from Ghana, it was possible such perspectives might link to what he said about his experiences. However, I saw such points as prompts for critical reflection on my practice as a tutor and researcher, and for openness to diverse views on reflection.

Habitus, capital and field

In reviewing the literature relevant to work based learning, impact, Thirdspace, equality, creativity, and critical reflection, I thought of the participants and what I knew of them as their tutor, and anticipated a diversity of experiences, perceptions, and impacts. It seemed that further theory would be useful in comprehending this diversity, and I looked to Bourdieu's (1997/ 2000) concepts of habitus, capital and field to provide this. One might value Rancière's (1987/1991) core assumption of equality of intelligence, and recognise that Bourdieu begins with an assumption of inequality (Pelletier, 2009). However, as a work based learning tutor it seems pertinent to recognise material inequalities and differences, and consider implications for practice.

Differences between participants could be understood partly by considering habitus, which Bourdieu (1982/ 1987/ 1990) characterises as 'dispositions acquired through experience' (p. 9) and which facilitates a focus on individual agency within a particular socio-political context. He describes it further as individuals' 'socially constituted

nature' (p. 11). Bourdieu (1982/ 1987/ 1990) suggests that his own habitus contributed to his tendency to make the most of opportunities – things which happened by chance - that came his way, that others might have 'let go by' (p. 26). This prompted me to note whether participants demonstrated similar tendencies.

The strategies individuals develop for action in their context is informed by their habitus, and this accounts for some of the variation in approaches each of us develop. However, within a context there will, to some degree, be evidence of 'principles imposing order on action' (Bourdieu 1982/ 1987/ 1990, p. 79). Thus, for participants, the degree to which they effected impact in the workplace, for example, would be influenced by their habitus, but contextual factors would also be pertinent: habitus is active in relation to a field (the socio-cultural setting in which the agent is present). Additionally, the nature (social, economic, cultural) and amount of capital they possess, and its 'fit' with the field, influences individuals' actions. The same habitus can lead to different practices and outcomes depending on the nature of the field wherein it acts: there might be harmony, which can reinforce the habitus; there might be disharmony, leading perhaps to amendment of expectations and aspirations (Bourdieu, 1982/ 1987/ 1990).

A social constructionist perspective leads one to understand how habitus emerges and can change: human beings' social nature means, Berger and Luckmann (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018) suggest, that one's sense of self develops through interaction with others. For the participants, some 'others' were long-term, from groups such as family, school, and religion. 'Others' might also be shorter-term, perhaps from one's studies (particularly during each person's research period) or employment. While I was unsure how evident habitus, field and capital would be; knew that they would not be the only tools to use in seeking to analyse participants' stories; and acknowledge their subjectivity (in that different people could recognise and interpret differently while using them), nevertheless, these concepts seemed helpful when identifying and trying to understand the participants' experiences and the impact of their work based learning, and one way (not the only way) to explain differences perceived between individuals.

Creative exploration and representation

As indicated, the intention was to be creative in this exploration of the impact of work based learning through researching learners' experiences. Furthermore, I wished to

use creativity in my representation of this research, seeking to make it engaging and accessible. I felt encouraged in the aim for creative exploration by Poole's (2017) argument for creative approaches to researching impact. While I did not intend to take a participatory arts-based approach, Page et al's (2014) creative workshops; Pässilä et al's (2016) and Pässilä et al's (2017) practice; and Adams and Owens's (2016) investigation, all indicate how creativity can lead to enhanced understanding (in these cases for both researcher and participants). Such reading inspired me to explore further the literature relating to creative research and representation. I reviewed other approaches that might fit with a social constructionist stance, allowing openness to a wide range of data and flexibility in analysis and representation.

I had encountered Sparkes's (2007) vignettes of academic life, and Brante's (2012) found poetry with which she conveyed her understandings of the experiences of teachers who had left the profession. Sparkes's (2007) and Brante's (2012) work was vivid and powerful, and I wished to emulate them. Sandelowski, Trimble, Woodard and Barroso's (2006) rationale for using monologues to present the experiences of HIV-positive women also indicated a wish for accessibility and engagement. In referring to further creative formats that qualitative researchers use to present their research, desiring to make research more accessible to more people, they argue there is the 'desire to evoke more feeling (as opposed to purely cognitive) understandings (van Maanen, 1997) of human experience' (p. 1354).

Butler-Kisber (2002) suggests that arts-based approaches to presenting findings might better facilitate portrayal of complexity than traditional approaches, and that narrative research requires the researcher to work closely with participants, respecting and reporting their voices. Specific, detailed contextual reference enables others to take from the portrayal that which resonates with them. Readers can be brought closer to the work. Butler-Kisber (2002) suggests this approach makes a positive contribution to educational practice. This seemed to support the use of alternative approaches in an education thesis.

Eisner (1997) provides seminal justification for arts-based approaches, including the following pertinent points: they might enable a focus on the particular rather than the abstract; might illuminate a point; might generate insight and awareness of complexity through the opening up of ambiguity. He suggests such approaches can give one a view from 'the edge' (p. 9), so facilitating wider discourse and conceptions. He (1997) also warns of the need to ensure that novelty is not substituted for substance – there has to

be considered reason for the use of alternative forms.

Bochner and Ellis (1998) suggest that such forms might facilitate representation of human beings' complexity, and can leave the research journey open to surprise, challenges and alternative perspectives. Such forms can also strengthen accessibility, and evoke the reader's own feelings and ideas for comparison with the experiences of those they are reading about. Banks (cited in Banks & Banks, 1998) suggests that fiction can be a viable mode of presentation when there is a desire for the research to evoke in the reader 'a feel for the subjective experience of others' (p. 18). Of course, the 'feel' will be triggered by the researcher's interpretation and how this is represented - others might interpret differently; he suggests, misquoting Picasso, that presentation of the truth is not the aim, but a desire to convince the reader of 'the truthfulness of his or her lies' (p. 17). I was unfamiliar with the use of fiction within educational research, but the work of those considered here resonated with my wish for readers' engagement in my interpretation, and in relation to the participants, without suggesting these would be the only possible interpretations, or ways of presenting them. Reading about narrative research (which is outlined in Act 3) led me to encounter Dawson, a poet, novelist and biographer, who refers to 'the logic of imagination as a means for finding out', and to 'applying fiction to facts like a poultice; to draw something out' (cited in Cline & Angier 2013, p. 108). Such sources provided support for my continuing exploration for creative means to both explore and represent. Regarding representation, Page et al (2014) exemplify how one might incorporate creative representations into one's writing. This, along with my encountering Brante's (2012) found poetry and Sparkes's (2007) vignettes of academic life made me wish to represent my research – or part of it – creatively so that it was engaging and accessible to the reader. I explore this in more detail in the next Act, incorporating consideration of Clough's (2002) interweaving of creative features (in his case, stories presented in part as play scripts) with analysis. I explain how choosing ethnodrama (Saldana, 2008) as a means for representation, and the consequent writing of play scripts to represent aspects of the research, offered a creative aspect that also enhanced my awareness and deepened my understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions.

Conclusion

This review of the literature has considered theory relevant to work based learning, provision which was once controversial in higher education, which has now gained some recognition as a discipline in its own right, yet still remains an 'outsider' to

conventional provision. The focus has been on literature relating to provision, approaches and concepts prevalent in 'Anglo' cultures, although international perspectives were recognised and identified as possible guides for alternative approaches. The continuing validity of Dewey's (1938) theoretical position was recognised. The informing role of experience in the shaping of future experiences is relevant and significant.

The complexity and varying understandings of 'impact' were considered, identifying consideration of personal, professional, organisational and societal impact as relevant to research into work based learning. Themes through which participants' experiences and perceptions of work based learning could be considered were identified.

Finally, the means by which to take a creative approach in gathering, analysing and representing data were considered, and will be examined in more detail in the next Act. There was a wish to be open to gathering a wide range of data, to analysing it according to the themes identified (and others, should they emerge) and to representing it in an accessible and engaging way.

This review of the literature, undertaken alongside contemplation of my practice, values and assumptions, leads to confirmation of the focus of this research as:

The impact of work based learning: a creative exploration of learners' experience

and the research questions as:

What are the constituents of work based learning experience for learners on the individually negotiated work based learning Masters programme for distance learners?

What is the impact of their work based learning experience at personal, professional, organisational and/or societal level?

As indicated in this Act, I already identified social constructionism as the preferred methodological stance. In the next Act I will examine this in more detail, also explaining the selection of research methods, and how these ideas fitted with my creative intentions.

Act 3 Planning the journey (Research methodology)

Introduction

In this Act, I explain the means by which I conducted a creative exploration of learners' experiences of work based learning, and sought to recognise and understand the impact of this experience. I explain and give a rationale for my research methodology and the themes chosen for analysis. I also explain how my research aims, approach, and personal and professional perception led to innovative representation of data analysis, and my creation of a collection of play scripts, one for each participant.

I set out below how social constructionism underpinned my research approach, and outline the pertinence of narrative research. I then consider the incorporation of fiction into this approach, and my journey to the creation of play scripts, which are a significant feature of this thesis. It is appropriate to explain this aspect of my research fully. It is not a common approach to take in work based learning research, and I was rather dismissive of fiction in research when I first encountered it during my studies (see Learning profile), so it is relevant to explain how I came to perceive this approach far more constructively. In this Act, I refer to how I worked through my unfamiliarity by reading, conference discussion, and practice.

I identify my investigation as a case study and compare my approach to an example in the literature that also used narrative research. The details of data collection methods are explained, drawing on literature pertaining to narrative research and also work based learning, and my data analysis methods are outlined. Literature pertaining to narrative research and case study approach supports my consideration of legitimacy and ethics.

Research approach

The theoretical assumption in social constructionism, that reality is constructed through our interactions with others (as indicated by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015), and that individuals vary in the construction and meaning of their experiences, which then inform subsequent experiences and sense making (Dewey, 1938) is appropriate for research into negotiated work based learning provision, where learners shape their programme to be relevant to their own professional context and interests. An approach enabling attention to be paid to individual experience appeared relevant. The assumption that each person's sense making is different in nature fits with an assumption of equality of individuals and a valuing of individual agency (the latter assumption and value held by me and facilitated by the programmes the research participants studied).

Maintaining this position throughout the research facilitated focus and depth, although a pragmatic approach was appropriate. Easterby-Smith et al's (2015) 'engaged pragmatism' (p. 61), by which they mean the researcher is engaged with, rather than detached from, the research context, seeking to get close to what they are researching, and believing that meaning structures emerge from lived experience, fitted my intentions and assumptions, and the work based learning context. So, too, did the possibility to move between different philosophical positions, using the method(s) most likely to help awareness and understanding, as Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis (2012) suggest can be done. I perceived that social constructionism and pragmatism were appropriate means for engaging with varied individual perceptions and presentations of experience. At the same time, I needed to undertake the work reflexively, recognising how and when my approaches and assumptions influenced the data I gathered and my analysis. In seeking to be critically reflective in my approach throughout my research, Brookfield's (2017) guidance on developing one's critically reflective skills is relevant. He suggests identifying one's assumptions through adopting four different lenses in turn (the student's, one's own, one's peers and theory). His application of his advice to his own practice and assumptions indicate some of the barriers to exposing one's assumptions, such as those relating to power relations (so, for example, one might think one has created a context of equality, then find that longstanding relationships (which were unequal) still influence perceptions of power). I adapted and applied his approach as and when seemed appropriate, identifying, for example, when my own expectations regarding participants' experiences of impact, and my reading of the literature,

influenced my approach in data collection and contemporary and subsequent interpretations.

Using a social constructionist approach, I wished to be open rather than directive in gathering data, with research participants (creators of meaning) taking control of the amount, nature and structure of data available. I wished to be creative in this exploration, both in data collection and in analysis and representation. To achieve this combination of goals, I thought narrative research was appropriate.

While 'narrative' commonly means a story, an account of events, Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou (2013) consider the diversity of approaches possible within narrative research, which might facilitate external expression of individual, internal events, thoughts and so on, or deal with pre-existing stories. While this approach is gaining in popularity within social research, there is a lack of clarity about method and focus, due in part, Squire et al (2013) suggest, to its origins in various academic spheres (including sociology, psychology, postmodernism and poststructuralist approaches). Brockmeier (2013) champions narrative research as flexible in its ontological foundations, suggesting it involves 'co-fashioning' (p. 269) at ground level the necessary concepts and methods for each situation.

Squire et al (2013) suggest narrative research facilitates perception of different layers of meaning, and allude to its critical potential, whereby the 'point' is not just the story that emerges, and how it is created, but also the power relations in their construction and consumption, in their silencing, contesting or accepting, and in their effects. These points were pertinent when I considered the data gathered from the research discussions in terms of both participants' focus and selection and what was absent, and my identification and selection of data.

The transdisciplinary nature of narrative, as outlined by Squire et al (2013), along with an apparent acceptance of ontological flexibility, fitted with my wish to be open to the unexpected, and to encountering and adopting different perspectives, as this is pertinent to work based learning research which requires the researcher to be prepared to adopt new approaches and understandings, as the research progresses. Narrative research appeared to offer a suitable approach for collecting, analysing and presenting data. It fitted my desire in the research discussions for participants to take the lead, and my wish to avoid prepared questions. Taking this approach, the intention was for stories to

emerge that would feature participants' voices more strongly than might be possible in semi-structured interviews, in which I would have shaped the focus throughout. I wished to be open to the small, apparently inconsequential items as well as identifiable stories.

The growing recognition of this approach in academic research as indicated by Squire et al (2013), along with a more general, longstanding appreciation of stories across cultures and traditions (Wall & Rossetti, 2013) suggests it is rich in opportunity for insight, unexpected understandings and possible impact on the researcher. Regarding analysis, Adams and Owens (2016) refer to the 'aesthetic distancing' (p. 118) required for effective analysis and presentation of narrative, making reflection on the familiar with new eyes possible. Their work, informed by Rancière, indicates how deeply critical aesthetic distancing might be, where 'roles, territories and language can be called into question' (p. 119). These arguments indicated the potential for narrative research to offer a means for collecting and analysing data in a critical way. Analysis in relation to the research themes might facilitate such a distancing in this study.

Regarding presentation of data and analysis, stories appear to be an accessible, potentially powerful way of dealing with and presenting data. Clough (2002) presents stories arising from his educational research using narrative as play scripts, conveying dynamically deep aspects of his analysis through reference to words spoken, actions and attitudes. Brante (2012) offers a different articulation of stories through her found poetry using the words of teachers she interviewed who had left the profession, which captured data about career turning points. Sparkes's (2007) work indicates the potential of storytelling in academic contexts to convey pertinent, profound messages. Outside of academia, Paul Auster perceives people as 'hungry for stories' (Springford & Lockwood, 2017), suggesting we understand the world through stories. He believes that stories' impact requires us to be open to changing our thinking. Wall and Rossetti (2013) refer to how stories and story making help one make sense of experiences and process emotions, and to the potential power of storytelling to motivate and transform organisations. This fits with an aspiration to present data collected in a narrative, accessible way, and with Reed and Proctor's criterion (cited in Costley et al, 2010) for practitioner research to be 'likely to yield insights which can be conveyed in a form which make them worthy of interest to a wider audience' (p. 3). Thus, various sources indicated that narrative research was appropriate for the research intentions and focus.

Some, such as Clough (2002) and Sparkes (2007), indicated fictional elements were acceptable, as did others considered in Act 2, such as Banks (Banks & Banks, 1998).

Fiction in narrative research

Squire et al (2013) introduce a number of approaches, varying in purpose, ontology, methods of data collection and analysis, and presentation of findings. Amongst approaches possible is the use of fiction. The main proponent of using fiction (which he also calls 'storying methodology' (p. 6)) encountered during my studies was Clough (2002) (Learning profile). He justifies his displaying of the approach (rather than offering guidance on method) by arguing that each individual who uses it in their own research will do so in ways that fit with their ethical and moral position. Nevertheless, one can glean something of his methods, and consider what this suggests for one's research, and whether adopting his approach would be justified.

Clough (2002) constructs five stories through a combination of play script, narrative prose telling more of the story, and background or explanatory asides in prose, in the voice of the author. Justification for this method precedes their presentation, which is followed by his interpretation of the stories, and identification of the value of stories in educational settings, and the place of fictional writing in education and social research. Clough (2002) uses an architectural metaphor to consider the writing of stories in educational research, suggesting that as with designing, planning and constructing a building, one needs to think about the purpose, function, audience/ users/ context of the stories. He also refers to his consultation of creative writers' practice, to perceive strategies for effective communication. Regarding this thesis, a main purpose was to understand work based learning from the participant's perspective; a key function was to articulate this understanding (to myself and others – these being primarily the thesis examiners); the context beyond the examination team was my professional practice and discipline. I was interested to explore how story making could support this purpose and function and be appropriate to context.

Each story presented by Clough (2002) was constructed from his experience over some time in each educational setting. Events and themes emerged relating to his research purposes or interests and, sometimes a considerable time after leaving a particular setting, he created a story. He imported fragments of data from real events, interviews, observations and other sources, and combined them with his intuitions and

imagination; he aimed to preserve anonymity and at the same time convey 'versions of the truth' with a mix of raw data and 'symbolic equivalents' (p. 9). He emphasises that what he presents are his versions of stories, and that he is not speaking for others.

His work indicates how infusion of fiction into accounts of experience might engage the reader strongly, as does the creative approach of others. While Brante's (2012) work was not fiction, in that the poetry she presents comprises the words her research participants said, the creativity in the composition help make the poems strong articulation of her participants' difficult times. Sparkes's (2007) article was influential when writing my paper (Appendix 2/ Scott, 2017). He describes his article as a response to 'the plea by Pelias (2004) for a methodology of the heart' (p. 521). He presents vignettes from academic life, synthesised with consideration of his own understandings, feelings and ideas. His paper was accessible, engaging, and resonant with my own experiences. Reading Clough's (2002) stories was exciting, and immersion in the events and contexts portrayed possible. This was something to emulate. It was, however, relatively unusual within the work based learning world, so further informed consideration was needed. I referred to pertinent sources in the previous Act, and explain below the approach taken in this research, which was to use play scripts for representation of aspects of my analysis. The first step in this explanation was a deeper understanding of the use of fiction within education research.

In addition to the potential for reader engagement, which made use of fiction attractive, Clough (2002) suggests that fiction can take readers beyond particular specifics of a research project, and of the stories presented, to more general understandings. Additionally, presenting research in this way might prompt readers' development of their approach. I sought to present the understandings and insights gained from my research in ways that indicated relevance beyond my own practice. While using fiction in presenting research was unusual, doing so might prompt new, general understandings and insights, rather than being limited to specific details reported in the thesis. Portrayal of experiences relating to a particular theme, such as equality, might connect to others' approaches and perspectives in their own research areas. Such a possibility is supported by my own experience, as I find that my use of fiction in research prompts me to consider fresh approaches to assessment for current students, so that creativity might feature more overtly. Similarly, conference presentations incorporating extracts from play scripts created has prompted discussion about pedagogical applications: the approach appears to engage (and I explain in more detail

in Acts 5 and 6 how I have used the play scripts so far in my practice, and the ideas this gives me for work with other groups and for research). Ethical questions are also asked, and ethical issues are considered below.

Clough's (2002) reference to the variability of consciousness, and how the meaning of language arises from its relation to 'regressed knowledge' (p. 88) which will differ between individuals, indicates that readers' reactions to and interpretations of the play scripts collection here (Appendix 1: *Voices from the edge: Crossing borders*) will differ: my intention to convey aspects of a participant's experience in relation to a particular theme might not be met. My explanation of the play scripts' creation, introduction to them, and reference to them in the data analysis 'frame' the stories. This might influence the reader's interpretation. Of course, the reader could go directly to *Voices from the edge: Crossing borders* and read the play scripts first, considering their own reactions and interpretations, before reading my intentions. Such variation can be constructive, offering different perspectives and interpretations, and perhaps prompts for further research. Clough's reference to Inglis's 'map on which many individuals may find their place' (Inglis cited in Clough 2002, p. 100) is apposite: different reactions and interpretations can be accepted and explored.

Clough's (2002) approach facilitates powerful portrayals of troubled, conflicted individuals and contexts. In comparison, the data I expected to collect arose, I perceived, from more positive circumstances, and were shared by individuals in, apparently, easier situations, able to access useful, supportive, appropriate intrinsic and extrinsic resources. Despite these differences, Clough's (2002) approaches and arguments seemed appropriate for helping reach and convey a critical, inclusive understanding of the participants whose experiences I considered.

Clough (2002) synthesised data of different types from different sources, and also from his own intuition. Sparkes (2007) also refers to a synthesis of data gained from different sources, including his own experiences, and 'fleeting glimpses of myriad reflections seen through broken glass, and multiple layers of fiction and narrative imaginings' (p. 522). Additionally, Clough (2002) refers to how creative writing and other art forms informed his approach. Goodson (2016) states that narrative (and life history) research often involves in-depth interviews through a collaborative process in which trust and a close relationship are established. Limited questioning by the researcher is intended to encourage a flow, with participants controlling and sequencing their stories. Goodson

(2016) speaks of follow-up meetings that can move the conversation towards a life history. While life history was not the intention in this thesis, this prompted me to invite participants to a second meeting.

As a tutor on the programmes that participants had taken, I was an insider researcher. Perhaps the disadvantages Costley et al (2010) refer to regarding insider research (such as the power dynamics which can sometimes make individuals feel obliged to participate, and possible difficulties with anonymity) were lessened by the fact that all potential participants had completed their studies, and gained their Masters, so those studies were now in the past. The relationships we had appeared to be either neutral and quite distant, with minimal contact, or fairly positive. Involvement in their studies seemed, overall, to go well, even if sometimes there could be considerable difficulties for an individual in meeting assignment requirements. Also, it was probable that enough time had passed for feelings to be no more than generally positive, and that we would be meeting more as independent equals than if they had still been involved in studies for which I was a tutor. Thus, it seemed possible for the participant (rather than researcher) to control the flow of discussion, as Goodson's (2016) participants had done.

Regarding data analysis, Clough (2002) asserts that a core element of using narrative fiction approaches in one's research is to articulate the stories 'beneath'; in other words, that the journey to one's interpretations, the assumptions, decisions and reasons for those decisions, should be presented transparently. He advises to recognise one's own 'threads' as influential in one's perceptions. While I needed to identify and articulate a position, (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012) I needed to follow through a methodological approach (social constructionism), research method (narrative research) and value (equality) as fully as I could. Thus, certain elements appear in the stories that my own 'threads' had not anticipated. I also needed to consider how what learners said resonated with my own experiences – as a tutor, student, worker in other roles and other organisations, parent, wife, child.

Clough's (1996) reference to his own threads also makes one mindful of participants' threads. In considering and analysing the data collected, I needed to consider what these might be in relation, for example, to me as a researcher as well as a tutor, in relation to the purposes and nature of research generally and my research specifically.

Awareness of whether different threads predominated at different times was also important.

Having selected narrative research as an appropriate method to support a creative investigation of participants' experiences of work based learning, and recognising it could be constructive to incorporate fiction into representation of one's research, I needed to select the format for this representation. I explain next how I came to choose play scripts as the appropriate format.

The journey to play script creation

I shared my desire for accessibility at several conferences, inviting suggestions for how to achieve this, expecting the main suggestion to be to write short stories, a format that seemed to have some precedence. For example, the inclusion of learners' stories in Mumford and Roodhouse's (2010) work, and the presentation of volumes of stories written by learners at the Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies about their employment and study experiences (Merrill et al, 2016), differed in approach and style, but demonstrated how stories could facilitate interest and engagement. One conference delegate suggested radio plays because this format could convey the different 'voices' of which I had been speaking (I was in the early stages of data collection then, and the different voices I referred to were those of higher education institutions regarding impact, and learners' study experiences). At the time, this suggestion seemed to be for the future, and a little too experimental for a thesis. I expected to choose a different format. I carried on collecting data, listening to participants' stories, still unsure how to represent them, or the ideas arising from them, but wishing to find a way to convey their power, the strong images they conveyed, and the deeper awareness they offered of learners' experiences, competing commitments, changes of perceptions, growth of ideas. Reading Clough (2002) again, I understood better his intentions in presenting his impressions and understandings of research participants and situations in part as play scripts; it did offer an opportunity to present one's interpretations (sometimes based on data other than words said, such as gestures, tones of voice, and silences) dynamically.

Also, the creation of play scripts fitted with a social constructionist ontology. In trying to understand participants' interpretations of their experiences, and how these arose, I was more aware of other 'different voices' for each participant, such as inner voices

which might concern identity or changing role; others' voices, such as those of friends, family, past, current and future employers; national or political voices, such as changing perceptions of employability, employment and wellbeing. The play script format had potential to convey such interpretations of participants' stories, together with what were pertinent aspects of their stories for my research focus.

Although unfamiliar with using play scripts as a means to convey aspects of data interpretation, I was more confident in using such an approach from a practical perspective, and in terms of my habitus. As a child and in early years of secondary school I had created plays to perform with my friends. Sometimes unwritten co-creations were developed in the playground or in preparation for school assembly or an English class; sometimes I created plays for collaborative performance (often just for our own interest, with no audience). My early career as primary school teacher, and dance and fitness tutor, offered opportunities to create plays and other performances with or for the pupils or dance participants. More recent experiences of writing plays occurred when I took a creative writing course in which I wrote radio plays for some assignments. I have also been a consumer of drama since childhood, attending a school located close to a theatre that produced 'ground-breaking work' (EverymanPlayhouse, n.d.). This interest has remained, and provided a field from which I have drawn capital and which has shaped in part my habitus. It afforded me confidence to consider creating and incorporating short play scripts into my thesis, whereas I had little capacity to consider other mediums such as visual arts, or music. Of the written genres, it seemed that play scripts had the potential to offer dynamism: the focus would be on actions, contexts, relationships and perhaps fewer words would be needed to convey the interpretations than might be the case with alternatives. Their creation would involve my imagining of how participants came to perceive their experience as they did, of possible factors involved in the creation of their narratives, and of possible settings and people significant in meaning construction. This thinking allayed methodological concerns somewhat, and seemed to fit with social constructionism and narrative research. Thus, that suggestion made at a conference was taken up – in part (the play scripts' brevity preventing them from appearing to be radio play extracts).

Further search of the literature led to identification that my developing intentions fitted Saldana's (2005, cited in Saldana, 2008) definition of 'ethnodrama' as a written script comprising 'dramatized, significant selections of narrative collected through interviews' (p. 196) and through other methods. Consideration of various ways to represent

aspects of my research, prior to selecting play scripts, fitted Saldana's (2008) advice to use it if it is the most effective mode for presenting participants' lived experiences. Ethnodrama seemed to offer a means to convey tensions within and between people and organisations, and subtle variations in individuals' approaches and perceptions, which might often be unstated in the workplace and everyday life, and difficult to convey in a research report. Saldana (2008) notes several challenges for creators of ethnodrama and ethnotheatre (the latter referring to the performance of a scene rather than a written script), including the potential for such work to be criticised for the lack of a theoretical framework. In this thesis, the development of the play scripts with reference to the research themes, and the inclusion of a full data analysis section, which is distinct from the scripts but connected to them through cross-referencing and inclusion of script extracts within the analysis, mitigates that concern somewhat. Saldana (2008) also suggests that those inexperienced in drama might struggle to avoid heavily 'didactic content', or to create 'participant/character-driven action' (p. 204). I refer in the following section to my experience of this and my attempt to overcome the problem. Never intending to include ethnotheatre in this thesis, I needed to heed Saldana's (2008) advice to gain feedback on this 'closet drama' (p. 204) (as indicated later).

Considering Saldana's work (2008) led to exploration of further literature indicating the potential power and accessibility of ethnodrama. For example, Morgan, Jones, Gilbourne and Llewellyn (2013) appreciated its potential for conveying the complexity of lived experiences, when teaching sports coaches. Using ethnodrama facilitated their students' acquisition of insights into theoretical work and development of holistic thinking. This resonates with work based learning research: the workplace requires constant synthesis of ideas and skills, and one's experiences are multi-faceted. Taylor's (2018) production of several plays relevant to organisational contexts, which offer a different way of thinking about organisations, provides further support for my use of ethnodrama here, and in future practice. While the work of Pässilä, Oikarinen and Harmaakorpi (2015) deals primarily with ethnotheatre, and so perhaps not directly relevant here, it offers suggestions for taking 'research-based art' (as Saldana (2008, p. 196) terms it) into my future practice, where short adaptations of their approach might be incorporated into workshops, for example.

As I contemplated the prospect of writing play scripts in my thesis, and the style I should adopt, I reviewed the style of playwrights with whom I was familiar. Willy Russell's direct approach - minimal action but active dialogue, with much conveyed through the

words themselves – seemed appropriate. I admired his ability to convey feeling and intention through suggestion, and to prompt perception of undercurrents, as in, for example, *Educating Rita* (Russell, 2003). Arthur Miller's style was also considered. His detailed 'asides' (as for example, in *The Crucible* (Miller, 1952)) initially appeared to be a technique I might incorporate.

Developing intentions; developing scripts

Saldana (2008) suggests that ethnodrama can be created based on data collected in a number of ways. In the case of Morgan et al (2013), one person wrote the initial scripts, informed by his research. These were then discussed and developed further collaboratively. It seemed necessary, for a doctoral thesis, for me to undertake this work independently. In the absence of research collaborators, I used guidance offered in the literature to develop and hone my work, along with actions prompted when sharing extracts with research participants and at conferences.

In the course of constructing and reconstructing the play scripts, and the interweaving of creation and analysis, my intentions regarding their use changed. Initially, the intention was to convey my impression of all or most of the competing commitments, perspectives, and interests for learners as individuals and professionals, and for the employing organisations. I wished to capture for each participant all impressions I had of their experiences in relation to my research themes and impact. I imagined for each participant several settings and people pertinent to meaning creation. I revisited the transcripts, identified sections directly relating to the research themes, imagined scenarios in which they could be expressed, and wrote them. The resulting play scripts were each about ten pages in length; I had tried to capture so much that many of the points appeared to get lost. Each one included a scene with me, with the risk of appearing as a transcript extract. Although my own interest continued, I perceived it would not for readers. In Norris's (2011) terms, I needed to create a balance between pedagogy and 'poiesis' (p. 2) (or creative production), whereas I had perhaps been too focused on pedagogy, conveying as much of my interpretation as possible. Given that a motivation was to explore how to make research engaging and accessible, amendment was needed, for interest and clarity. The importance of such action is supported by Saldana's (2008) concern for the dramatic quality of play scripts written by the inexperienced, and Alvesson and Sköldberg's (2018) reference to the engaging writing style many social constructionists possess, but which is weighted to description rather

than analysis. Selection and amendment could not only lead to more dramatic creations, but also better support the analysis presented.

As indicated above, the 'different voices' noted in that conference were more numerous and complex than initially perceived: each participant might have different voices competing and informing their actions, affecting the impact of their experiences. Also, within higher education institutions, there are voices of varying dominance: even for the institution, 'impact' does not mean one thing only. I also noticed my own different voices: as I read and re-read transcripts and considered early versions of play scripts, I was more aware of which voices were dominant at each time, and understood Andrews's (2013) suggestion that returning to data at different times (in her case over a very long period) can yield different interpretations. So many voices! Perhaps the initial versions of the play scripts were symptomatic of the early stages of my thinking in the research journey. Heavily engaged with the participants' experiences, wishing to present them well, alongside incorporating all lines of thinking (i.e. themes) as fully as possible, the initial attempts appeared disparate and unfocused, which reflected the nature of my thinking sometimes, at that stage in my research.

Revisiting the transcripts, I sought to identify, for each participant, the strongest themes, consider how best to represent them, and made amendments to arrive at the versions presented here (Appendix 1). I felt able to do this as I became more familiar with each participant's story, and as my reading around the themes continued, deepening my understanding. Reading about using drama to present research also helped me perceive the work as creative products as well as part of the analysis.

In the course of editing the play scripts, my awareness and understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions deepened. For example, in honing down Callum's script, the strength of his feelings about equality emerged. This was because the honing forced a focus on the power of his words when talking about the right of disabled people to work, on his perception of volunteers' talents being wasted, and on his research's apparent lack of organisational impact. Thinking of possible scenarios in which he would articulate his ideas led to recognition, which might not have arisen otherwise, of the power of the social order, and of also how his thinking questioned this order. Without writing the play script I might have not have perceived such depth to Callum's ideas. This developed perception linked to recognising that creativity featured more prominently in his experience than I had previously considered, perhaps because I

had been largely thinking of creativity in terms of Robinson's (2017) third stage – innovation - which appeared lacking in Callum's story. Rethinking creativity to embrace Robinson's (2017) first two stages (imagination and creativity/applied imagination) led me to see their presence, as I visualised how he might convey his ideas. I gave the play script the title *Follow your passion* to reference the passion I now perceived Callum to have about his beliefs, and to convey the impression that he felt one's beliefs should influence actions.

Similarly, honing down Thomas's script, revisiting the transcript, helped me recognise how his modest manner somewhat covered his active involvement in organisational development, as did his informal reference to conversations with colleagues that were nevertheless about practice development. Thomas's play script needed to indicate how organisational impact might arise through informal as well as formal means. The title *Adjusting logistics* references his job (logistics manager) and his moderate approach to impact (adjusting, rather than transforming, practice).

The play scripts contain much that was actually said in the interviews, and the content is influenced by my analysis of this data in relation to the research themes. Data and analysis were combined with imagined conversations and scenes, intended to convey theme(s) that came out most strongly for each individual, and other aspects of interpretation it seemed appropriate to convey. An example of my approach, demonstrating interweaving of data, analysis, themes and imagination is now presented, and concerns Willa. A similar approach was followed for all participants.

I had two research discussions with Willa, as I did with four other participants, each of between 20 and 40 minutes duration. I recorded them and wrote transcripts. In the first discussion, Willa spoke of her family's reaction to her completion of her Masters, which surprised her in its strength, and also in what it revealed of their understanding of its demanding nature. Willa also referred to peer support, and changes in the nature of conversations with colleagues to incorporate more reference to research. In the second discussion, Willa referred to her use of the notebook I had given her, to her experience of the Aurora programme, and to ideas she was developing regarding her career.

Analysing the transcripts, Thirdspace, personal and professional impact seemed to be strongly represented (and are considered in relation to Willa, along with all other participants, in the next Act, in which the data are analysed according to the research

themes). As Morgan et al (2013) did, so I aimed for evocation of Willa's experience and perceptions through relevant, engaging action. I imagined conversations and scenes to contextualise Willa's data. For example, I wondered what led her to say: 'I'm over the moon … but my family seem more excited than I am … they're going around telling absolutely anybody that they meet that their daughter, or their niece, has got a Distinction and finished her MA … I was, "No, I'm not coming round for dinner or whatever, 'cos I'm writing." I think they knew how important it was to me. I think they knew I struggled.'

Willa's reference to Helen Keller as her role model in her Aurora work provided insight into her determination to succeed: '… admired … her sheer determination to not let her disability stop her … Helen Keller was an inspirational role model, but … her tutor … helped her with her frustrations because Helen got very frustrated when she was trying to communicate … so I kind of likened it. It says that Ann [*the tutor*] broke through her isolation allowing her to blossom, and I said, "Just like [*this programme*] allowed me to blossom." '

Although initially I tried to convey more aspects of Willa's experience (peer support and references to research in conversations with colleagues), creation of just two scenes – with the family; at an Aurora meeting – allowed a stronger focus on the themes that emerged, and representation of Willa's experience and approach. Some contextual details (such as the reference to a local craft shop) arose from my knowledge of Willa over several years as her tutor, and consequent awareness of some of her outside interests. I noted Willa's vivid, positive language, which I tried to echo in the play script title, *Inspiration blossoms.*

Regarding the other participants, I followed a similar approach in play script creation and data analysis. I thought in similar depth about the appropriate title for each play script. Reference has been made to the titles of Callum's and Thomas's play scripts above. For Jack, I most wanted to convey his use of reflection to plan for the future, and his sense of adventure. The play script title, *Future reflections*, is intended to convey this. I had not anticipated the extent to which Lance would use ideas from his course in his practice, or the extent to which he sought collaborative working, and reflection by and with his team. The title *We can work it out* is intended to convey an impression of constructive collaboration. In contrast, I perceived Justin to feel frustrated, almost ground down by the apparent impossibility of finding a solution to a particular

challenge in work, hence the title *Once upon a time we'd cracked it.* Reflection and equality appeared the strongest themes in what he said, and appeared to link to difficulties he experienced.

I used previous knowledge about creative writing and drama to help me write the scripts, and also consulted published play scripts such as those by Russell (2003) and Miller (1952). Additionally, I consulted guidance from the process drama field. For example, Owens and Barber (2001) advise (for practitioners using process drama with groups) to ensure focus and tension are established. They advise to identify the most significant aspect of the work, and what can be learned from it. This supported a focus on the aspects of the participants' stories most relevant to the research focus, along with other elements seeming to be of particular significance. It also led me to decide to avoid inclusion of 'asides', although, as indicated above, I appreciated their use when reading Miller's work: with very short play scripts, such asides might lessen impact.

This, along with Owens and Barber's (2001) advice to consider symbol and metaphor in developing meaning, and to organise timings and pace to give the drama a dynamic, encouraged a more adventurous approach in later versions of the play scripts by, for example, reducing the number of different settings, choosing to keep the ones of most significance to the intended representation. So, for two scripts, all the action occurs in the workplace (emphasising for Callum the 'other', and conflict between his personal imaginings or hopes, and the organisational context and needs; emphasising for Lance his synthesis of personal, professional and organisational impact). For Jack, I chose to cut the script to just one scene, the setting being the interview for his new post, symbolising my perception of his approach and experience, in which thinking about the future was prominent. For Willa, the two locations represent her foundations (with family interest and support) and future (engaging in new, unfamiliar professional development opportunities). Only two play scripts now contain a scene with me: in each case this seemed to facilitate focused representation of aspects of the participants' experience and thinking that would be more difficult to achieve through purely imaginary scenes.

Sharing the intention to use play scripts in relation to research at subsequent conferences prompted some delegates to suggest how incorporation of such artefacts into one's teaching could enhance one's practice. Others questioned participant involvement in the play script creation. My approach was not participatory, unlike others who use drama to portray aspects of their research (such as Tanner, 2016 and

Norris, 2009/ 2016), and my intention was to present my personal interpretations of the participants' stories, rather than conduct collaborative research. However, I had stated in my application for ethical approval (Appendix 3) that I would let participants know of my progress, so I contacted each participant to ask him or her if they would like to read the script pertaining to their story. For those who indicated an interest, I emailed them their script as an attachment to a further email (Appendix 4).

The responses from the four who read their play scripts were positive, with no amendments requested. Nothing was thought to be offensive or compromising of anonymity. References were made to an unfamiliarity with the approach used, finding it fascinating; to interest in capturing emotions through reference to body language, which could lead to a new way into thinking about reflection in staff development; to emotions (both happy and nostalgic) triggered by the script prompting memories of 'the stories behind the story'. One person replied indicating he did not feel there was a need to see the script (I think because he trusted it would be appropriate). Another participant was out of easy contact due to being on an extended period of travel. With both of these individuals, I felt there was minimal reason for them to be concerned, and was confident to present a play script for each.

I was relieved I had not upset any of those who had read the work, and felt encouraged to continue, looking forward to when (following completion of my studies) there might be further discussion about this approach with participants, some of whom appeared interested in adapting it to fit with their practice. I should acknowledge that contextual factors were likely to influence participants to be supportive rather than critical in their replies: they were familiar with the study struggle (as Lance said in one research discussion, 'I feel your study pain') and would wish to encourage me in my own struggle; I hope the research discussions (following on from several years as their personal academic tutor) had confirmed my respect for and interest in their experiences. However, I found sending off the first email inviting them to read the play script, and then waiting for their reply, to be unsettling. I feared causing offence; receiving criticism of my creative skills, or finding that I had to delete scripts, and amend my approach considerably. I recognise that a participatory research approach would have pursued their feedback further, seeking to engage them in further development of the creations. I accept that other readers will come to the play scripts from different contexts and perspectives, and might be more questioning of them; I could have followed Saldana's (2008) advice more fully and asked for feedback from others in

addition to participants and conference delegates. While this could prompt ideas for future such practice, I am comfortable that I established as far as reasonably possible that the individuals whose stories are represented felt comfortable with them. I am also encouraged that creative exploration and representation has potential legitimacy within educational research; this is suggested by some conference delegates' responses to hearing play script extracts, in which they referred to their own creative approaches in both their teaching and research practice.

Participant feedback gave me confidence to continue with play scripts, and prompted me to see the scripts as a collection, which needed a title. This would strengthen their identity as a specific, creative element of my research. *Voices from the edge: Crossing borders* refers to the approach taken: in narrative research, one listens to participants' stories, which might be constructed with a range of voices. It also references the strong connection I found between participants' experiences and Thirdspace. Bhaba's (1994) consideration of crossing borders seemed particularly pertinent, indicating participants' experiencing, or effecting, of changes in their work following their studies (see analysis of the data in the next Act). Additionally, the title links to Eisner's (1997) valuing of arts-based approaches' potential to explore complexity and ambiguity through their view from 'the edge' (p. 9).

I suggest *Voices from the edge: Crossing borders* indicates the potential of this approach to bring to life aspects of the researcher's interpretation of participants' experiences; that the collection illustrates how focusing on the particular rather than the abstract (Eisner, 1997) can help draw attention to complexity (Bochner & Ellis, 1998, Butler-Kisber, 2002), and offer 'a feel for the subjective experience of others' (Banks & Banks 1998, p. 18). Writing the play scripts and intensively scrutinizing the transcripts informed my analysis of the data. In that analysis, along with consideration of the themes, I compare the resulting emerging insights with commonly expressed expectations in work based learning literature of personal, professional, and organisational impact. Impact might be hard to identify sometimes but can nevertheless be powerful. Writing play scripts facilitated my attempt to convey this in a way that might be difficult with more traditional methods only.

A desire to focus on the particular (individual participants' experiences and perceptions) and the small-scale nature of the investigation, indicated that a case study approach was appropriate.

Case study approach

Tight (2017) states that the term 'case study' should only be used to refer to research which is a detailed study of one or a small number of cases. However, he also recognises that the term is used much more widely, the number of definitions possible indicative, he suggests, of a developing understanding of case study. From these definitions, he identifies common threads, suggesting that a case study will be of a single, or a number of cases; the case will be complex, with specific limitations, studied within its context, and the analysis will be holistic. Such small-scale research should be useful and meaningful. Of the definitions he presents, my study fits best with the one that refers to 'analyses of persons, events … or other systems which are studied holistically by one or more methods' (p. 7). The case studied was an example from a class of 'phenomena that provides an analytical frame … within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates' (Thomas, cited in Tight 2017, p. 7). Thus, in this research, each participant is an example of a Masters graduate of work based learning.

Easterby-Smith et al (2015) refer to constructionist approaches to case study design, where the aim is to gather rich data. In terms of their outline of Stake's characterisation of qualitative case studies, my thesis could be considered an expressive study rather than an instrumental one: I selected the sample according to sharing of certain features: recent achievement of a Masters award from the same work based learning programme. I had surmised over my years as a tutor, and from reading work based learning literature, that the programme on which I taught shared similarities and differences with other work based learning programmes, and I expected that by focusing in depth on this one programme, insights would emerge that would be both directly relevant to my practice and also more generally to work based learning provision. Easterby-Smith et al (2015) suggest that case studies can '[inspire] new ideas and [illustrate] abstract concepts' (p. 90). Even one case study can challenge established theories and assumptions.

Tight's (2017) example of a case study using narrative research involved six participants, and provided, he suggests, meaning both for those within the research setting, and also the wider field. I perceived similarities between that and my intentions, regarding design and scale. The study (by Etherington and Bridges) was intended to review progress made as a result of counselling at a particular counselling agency. New clients were asked if they would be willing to participate in research once

their counselling period was over. Six individuals were interviewed. The researchers worked on the narratives, listening to them, thinking as much about the stories the participants told as about the participants. After going over the transcripts many times, the researchers asked the participants to highlight the most important parts of the stories for them; the two researchers continued to study the transcripts independently and then met to collaborate on identifying what was most significant for them (in terms of their theoretical and practical perspectives, their experiences, and the participants' meanings). They looked across all the stories to identify similarities and differences between the participants, and between their own ideas and the participants' ideas. In their research report they present the experiences of three participants in some detail, before going on to consider the effectiveness of such reviews in general.

This use of case study fitted social constructionist ontology, with its focus on participants' meanings that were then framed in relation to the researchers' concepts or themes. While I did invite participants to view their scripts, this was done less intensively than in the case study Tight (2017) refers to and without the intention of their further involvement in the development of the analysis. However, I did meet five participants twice. In the second meeting, I referred briefly to something they had said in the first meeting, and a couple of participants also referred to something they had said previously, but I then asked them to tell me other thoughts they had had about their study experiences. My intention to minimise my control as much as possible perhaps differed from Etherington and Bridges' approach. The presence of two researchers in their study perhaps gave more possibility for ideas and insights to emerge. However, Tight (2017) suggests that it would be possible for just one researcher to carry out a project similar in scale. In this thesis, in the process of creating the stories, unexpected ideas and understandings occurred, so perhaps the creative process stood in the stead of a fellow researcher.

A research project that was small-scale and in-depth offered more personal interest than large-scale quantitative studies. It could yield pointers to larger studies in the future. The next stage was to plan in more detail data collection and analysis methods.

Data collection

Bell with Waters (2014) suggest narrative enquiry can entail both the collection of stories as data, and a way of structuring the research project, where data collection,

interpretation and presentation are all part of a meaning-making process. Narrative enquiry might be particularly appropriate when the interest is in the personal accounts of experience, and can accommodate political aspects, due to the inclusion of voice - of participants, researcher, and relevant cultural group. More recent use of the method, they say, has included a particular focus on personal and professional experience, which fitted my intentions.

I emailed all students for whom I had been personal academic tutor who had completed their work based learning Masters programme within the last eighteen months, outlining my desire to research the experiences of such students as the focus for my doctoral thesis, and asking them to reply if they were interested in receiving more information (included in the ethical application document, Appendix 3). Eight people read the participant information document (included in Appendix 3), which gave more details of the intended focus and nature of the research. Six agreed to participate, completing an informed consent form (included in Appendix 3). This number seemed appropriate for research with social constructionist ontology. Easterby-Smith et al (2015) suggest that such research has a small number of cases chosen for specific reasons. The initial intention was to email a far wider number of students across all levels of study and include both those who had completed and those still studying. This was honed down to one level of study, and to those who had completed, which would facilitate a deeper approach. It might also, as indicated earlier, set us on a more equal footing, with my role as researcher rather than tutor the desired perception (although the student-tutor perspective might still be present, albeit weakly). Restricting the sample to students for whom I had been personal academic tutor meant that we also had had previous contact through emails, tutorials, perhaps workshops, and assessment. We already had something of a relationship. I was aware of some of the similarities and differences between the participants regarding their jobs, location, academic record, presence or absence of a disability. Clearly, then, this was a different relationship than if participants had been on another programme at another institution, and did not know me.

The stance taken was similar to Goodson's (2016), with the intention for participants to control the content, pace, and structure of what was said. The choice of location was also theirs. Bell with Waters (2014) present the advice of a narrative researcher, suggesting that the conversation should be extended and open-ended, and controlled by the participant. Having indicated my research interest in the email and documents they

had already received, at the start of the first discussion with each participant, I described my interest as being open to what they chose to discuss about their experiences of work based learning, rather than having pre-set expectations. Squire (2013) indicates other approaches possible within narrative research, such as when the researcher wishes to collect stories about particular experiences, and so asks specific questions. Beyond framing the focus of the research discussions as I did, through reference to their work based learning studies, I intended to leave control to the participant. However, Costley et al (2010) warn of the power at play in interviews, and how this might not be diminished when interviewer and interviewee know each other. Their reference to Kvale's assertion that interviews might be used in a 'fantasy of democratic relations' (p. 42) appears pertinent. While, in Rancière's (1987/1991) terms, I might be inferior in status to the participants (I needed them; they did not need me), I did not know that this would be the participants' perception; it could still be attuned to the student/ tutor relationship: some perceptions are strongly felt, and difficult to challenge, as Brookfield (2017) found in his attempts to establish an equal relationship with his students. In the past, when interviewing students (rather than graduates), I sense we eased into a more equal relationship, partly because of the subject matter, about which they knew more than I (the impact of their specific learning difficulty in the workplace) and partly because of my approach (using cards as prompts to discussion, rather than a question and answer format). Thus, I realised that an intention for an equal balance of power was somewhat idealistic, although I could work towards equal relationships being established.

I was concerned that asking participants to control the content of the research discussion, to say what they wished to say, what they felt was important and/or interesting to them, might be so different from what they were expecting (i.e. a more conventional interview where I asked them questions) that they would clam up and say very little. Therefore, I prepared 'prompt cards': pieces of card on each of which was written one word or phrase (such as 'impact'; 'surprise'; 'worst bit'; 'best bit'; 'others' views'). In previous research this had proved to be effective in giving the participant more control than possible in a semi-structured interview. However, I did not use them, because most of the participants were highly articulate and had some confidence in their skills and knowledge: conversations were generally full and free flowing. Also, Bell with Waters (2014) suggest that a trust relationship is important for a narrative approach to work, and I think that this existed between each participant and me, due to our longer term relationship as tutor and student, and the fact that they had completed

their studies, so there was no possibility that it could be connected to assessment. As indicated later (Act 4) I was not always as open to participants' stories as I wished to be, but nevertheless they controlled much of the conversation.

There were two research discussions with each participant, apart from in one case. The location was either the participant's workplace or my office for those I met in person. In the case of Thomas, who worked abroad, the first discussion took place by Skype, when he was in his office at work, and I was in my study at home. Each initial meeting took between thirty and forty-five minutes. The second discussion took place two to three months after the first and lasted between twenty and thirty minutes. All participants gave me permission to record the discussions that I then transcribed. In addition, all were offered, and accepted, a plain page notebook in which they could record, in the period between the two meetings, any ideas, recollections, symbols or items that came to mind relating to our discussion and their experiences of work based learning.

While asking research participants to meet me twice, and offering a means to capture intervening thoughts were new strategies for me, several authors suggest (in some cases assume) that research is carried out over several interviews (often spread over a considerable period of time). For example, Bell with Waters (2014) indicate this is likely, partly, they suggest, as part of the building trust process. They also suggest that a participant might regret some of the content they revealed, and wish to remove it from the data. Squire (2013) refers to several researchers who used second interviews in different ways, and Etherington and Bridges (Tight, 2017) returned to participants with a specific purpose relating to the transcripts.

At the beginning of the second discussion with each participant, I referred to a couple of points spoken of in the previous meeting, and asked what else they could say about their study experience. I also asked them if they had used the notebook. One person (Willa) had, so she explained this, and referred to her work in it several times throughout our discussion. A couple of other people had made notes in different ways, so they explained that. The second discussion with Thomas, who worked abroad, was replaced by his emailing to me further thoughts he had had about his studies. This was due to technical problems preventing our further use of Skype.

Data analysis

Having produced the transcripts from the recorded interviews, and Thomas's emailed notes, I went over them several times. Initially, I wished to identify what appeared to be significant points for each participant, irrespective of whether it related to my research themes. I noted what emerged fresh from the stories, and then looked for sections – or phrases or sentences – that might link to the research themes. I used my reading about each theme to help me identify the extent and nature of its contribution to learners' study experiences, reading the transcripts several times, noting phrases in the transcripts particularly pertinent to the themes, considering what this told me for each participant. Underpinning this was a social constructionist intention to recognise the construction of meaning for each participant.

Bell with Waters (2014) suggest that when analysing interviews, one could look through the responses for content that relates to one's research interests. They suggest that content analysis procedures used for analysing documentary evidence are relevant, and my practice did follow some of what that approach entails. In addition to searching the transcripts for phrases relevant to the research themes, I also used 'emergent coding' (Bell with Waters 2014, p. 133): as I read over the transcripts it became clear that critical reflection was a significant aspect of the study experience for some participants. Although my literature review had indicated limitations of critical reflection, it had also featured in much of the literature about work based learning, and had been integral to my teaching. Participants' reference to critical reflection supported its position as a research theme. (A critical perspective on this could be that it was only significant for participants because their studies had coerced them in to believing this). Another possible theme appeared to be tutor approaches, as some participants had taken a module taught by someone who appeared to have a style of teaching rather different from that of others. I chose not to take this up as an emerging code, partly because I felt it might take my research in a particular direction concerning pedagogy. An approach that involves retaining, acquiring and rejecting themes fits with Winter's (1991) warning to remain open regarding data, seeking to learn from it, and to respond (to some extent) to what is new in it. However, I have also maintained a perimeter, with which I sought a balance between considering as much of the data as possible, and limiting what was actually considered so this could be done in suitable depth.

My approach seemed to match Riessman's (2008) outline of thematic analysis, in which she notes that, in the cases she considers, prior theory was used as a source for interpretation of narratives, alongside maintaining a search for new insights. However, in Riessman's (2008) examples the story is kept intact, preserving sequences. I began my analysis taking each learner's narrative separately and analysing each one in terms of the themes. I then included two further concurrent stages. One was to synthesise the analysis from each participant, so that I considered each theme across all participants, rather than presenting each participant separately. The second arose through my wish to preserve something of their individual stories, and also the impression of each person as an individual. This wish, combined with the desire to make research accessible and engaging, led me to go over the transcripts again, and my previous analysis of each individual narrative, and to construct a play script to convey one (or possibly two) aspects of each story. As indicated above, the creation of the play scripts did more than present aspects of my research in an accessible way. In addition, the creative act led to further analysis and understandings. Having analysed each story individually, and written the play scripts, I reviewed and developed the synthesis across narratives, and present this in the thesis, rather than individual stories (with the play scripts giving a type of 'snapshot' of individual stories). Riessman (2008) suggests that a limitation of thematic analysis in narrative research is that the investigator's role in constructing the narratives analysed remains unclear. While I was uncertain how much detail was needed to counteract this difficulty, I intended to include reference to decisions taken and explain consequent actions.

My analysis, incorporating representation of aspects in play script form, led me to consider what I had discovered in response to the research questions, and this is articulated in Act 5.

Legitimacy and ethics

Consideration of the legitimacy of this research needs to include points relating to research generally and also to insider-research and narrative research. When undertaking any research, power needs to be considered (Costley et al, 2010). No matter how far one's values and approach relate to social constructionism, for example, the researcher is usually in operational control. Thus, in this research I identified with whom to request an interview, how interviews were to be conducted, recorded, analysed, presented. I controlled what I noted and used from the rest of my practice.

Discussions and the other methods of data collection were influenced by participants' situations and perceptions, of which I might not have been fully aware. Authenticity was limited, partly dependent on who told me what, how and why, and my setting of the conditions, my perceptions and interpretations. I needed to identify the implications of such limitations. I hoped that arranging to have two discussions, with an option for participants to record ideas in the intervening period, might facilitate both participants' expression of concerns, and also allow opportunity for qualification, elaboration, or self-correction.

Bell and Waters (2014) refer to the possibility of participants revealing more than they intended to share publicly, and, if they indicate their concern, influencing the editing of their story. All participants had the right to withdraw, and I was ready to respond to any concerns expressed about my work with due pastoral diligence (deleting work completely if necessary). Kim (2016) advises that throughout one's work, the narrative researcher should use ethical judgement (or 'phronesis', as she terms it), further enacted through 'caring reflexivity' (p. 106), which moves one to always being mindful of ethical aspects, and how one might always respect research participants' dignity and integrity. My intention was to follow this advice.

Such intention might be indicated in the creation and use of the documents referred to earlier (invitation for expression of interest; participant information document; informed consent form) all of which can be found as appendices to the application for ethical approval (Appendix 3), which I sought and was granted by the programme's Ethics Committee. These documents set out the research purpose and focus, and covered all conventional elements of such documents, such as right to withdraw, how to obtain answers to questions, express concerns, etc.

Anonymity was maintained from the start of data collection, using a code to denote each participant and ensuring identifying information was not included in any shared documentation. On successful completion of my doctorate, all collected data will be destroyed (apart from that presented in the thesis and play script anthology) after the awarding institution's required period of preservation. In the thesis, all participants are referred to by pseudonyms, and identifying details (such as explicit details of their job, or location) are excluded.

In my application for ethical approval I said that I would let participants know about my progress throughout the work, so they remained informed about the use of their contribution. Therefore, as indicated above, once I had created the play scripts, I contacted them to ask if they would like to see the one relating to them. Also as indicated, I shared ideas, and extracts from draft play scripts at conferences, in order to seek feedback.

Narrative fiction might be more subject to ethical criticisms than other approaches, where validity, reliability, objectivity are measurable and paramount. However, Clough (2002) suggests that all research, even quantitative reports, have stories beneath them, although often these remain unstated. While it might challenge the assumption that good research represents the data collected as closely as possible (a view I held for some years) Clough (2002) argues that any research approach is founded on assumptions and beliefs, that it is mistaken to aspire to present value-free research which represents reality as it is: there will always be selection, data favoured, data omitted. His argument that narrative fiction requires transparency regarding data selection and treatment was pertinent, leading me to aim for transparency through inclusion of details of construction of the play scripts, and of how this contributed to the analysis.

Tight (2017) states that a persistent criticism of case study research is that such research is weak in terms of generalizability, reliability and validity. He suggests that this concern might arise from a quantitative, scientific research perspective, which typically deals with large-scale investigations, whereas case study research is small-scale. Regarding generalizability, I realised that my thinking perhaps best fitted with a desire for '*exemplary knowledge'* (Thomas, cited in Tight 2017, p. 32, italics in citation and original). I expected to learn things I did not already know, and gain new insights and ideas about my practice development. I also thought the research might raise questions and suggestions (rather than generalised statements) about work based learning practice and the literature, in the nature of aspects for further exploration. This was because, while the nature of the programme involved in the research was particular in some respects (particularly in its individualised, negotiated, flexible nature) it also shared characteristics with other work based learning programmes, so it seemed reasonable to expect the findings to be relevant to a more general understanding of such provision, while not making assertions applicable to all. Costley et al (2010) recognise the potential constraints and tensions for insider researchers in terms of the actual

internal change they can bring about: change is usually sought, but Costley et al (2010) suggest that the individual needs to not just carry out the research but also justify the consequent findings and recommendations for practice, negotiating 'around systems and practices with creativity and ingenuity' (p. 7). This point is relevant when considering the nature and extent of the contribution my research makes (Act 6).

Regarding generalizability, reliability and validity overall, Tight (2017) refers to several authors who propose alternative ways to judge the quality of case study research, of which those relating to the constructivist/ interpretivist paradigm seem most relevant, and which he sums up as 'trustworthiness, credibility, transferability and confirmability' (p. 37). Credibility might be sought in a number of ways, such as asking participants to comment on your work. Being able to support one's points with reference to both the data and the literature also strengthens credibility. I tried to do this throughout the analysis. As indicated above (and discussed further below) I invited participants to read part of my work during its construction, specifically the play script relating to their experience. Trustworthiness involves providing sufficient information about the procedures followed and decisions taken for others to be able to evaluate this as reputable and reasonable. In the earlier part of my study, I had concerns about inclusion of something different, in the form of stories portrayed in one format or another. Exploration of some options helped me reach a decision. I suggest that writing about this process strengthens the dependability of this research. Transferability, Tight (2017) suggests, means the supply of information that lets others judge the research study's relevance and applicability more widely. Confirmability requires recognition of one's role in the research, not avoiding use of data that does not fit one's approach to analysis, and considering what other explanations or interpretations there could be. The intention was to meet this requirement throughout the thesis and research process noting where, for example, my prior perceptions influenced my anticipations or expectations regarding data; charting how my understanding and insights developed over the course of the study.

If, as Squire (2013) suggests is the case for many narrative researchers, one does not expect one single interpretation, that there are 'multiple valid interpretations' (p. 57), then the task is to persuade acceptance of the interpretation one presents. Methods to achieve this include a continuous checking of developing interpretations against the materials, seeking external assessment, seeking feedback from participants. I did the first of these, and to some extent the third. The second was achieved largely through

supervision, as further (detailed) external assessment seemed to demand something too onerous for the external person (assuming it meant reading the transcripts, having the themes explained, and reading my analysis). Of course, external assessment is ultimately the most significant for this doctoral thesis, but that takes place following completion, rather than during construction. It is hoped that the account of how the analysis developed (referred to briefly in this Act and also in Act 4) offers a means for readers to judge the persuasiveness of the interpretations presented. Throughout, I make reference to how my own and participants' approach and interpretation might be constrained or influenced by assumptions, perceptions and values, sometimes considering how alternative interpretations might have arisen through taking up other theoretical positions. Further argument in support of including explanation of the development of the analysis and reflexive consideration of one's interpretation is provided by Clough (2002) who, when considering the reader's judgement on the argument a research paper presents, suggests that we are persuaded by it if it shares our objects and so can speak to our experience. Metz's (2013) and Akdere and Salem's (2013) arguments (as outlined in Act 2) are reminders that when following Clough's (2002) line of thinking as one develops one's research methodology and methods, one remains within a particular cultural and socio-political context with its concomitant paradigms; readers with different contextual experiences and paradigms might have different responses to the thesis, some of which might be currently outside of one's scope of understanding. Clough (2004) refers to Pring's argument that the object of research will be seen differently by different practitioners who draw on different cultural resources, thus strengthening the need to be mindful of one's thinking and the reasons for it.

Conclusion

In this Act I explained how a narrative research approach with a social constructionist foundation offered a means for creative exploration of learners' experiences and perceptions of work based learning. Drawing on Saldana's (2008) work about ethnodrama, I outlined how creation of play scripts to represent aspects of my data interpretation not only facilitated (I believe) an interesting and accessible outcome, but also deepened my awareness and understanding of the data. My intention, like Clough's (2002) was to 'tell the truth as one sees it' (p. 17). I accept that, like Clough (2002), I have manipulated the data 'in order to tell a particular story – a *version* of the truth as the researcher sees it' (p. 18).

I had found a way to be creative in research approach and representation. In the next Act I introduce the play scripts and then go on to analyse the data, seeking to answer the research questions.

Act 4 Exploration (Data analysis)

Introduction

In this Act, I consider the data collected through the research discussions, and analyse it according to the research themes, considering each participant's experience in relation to each concept. As indicated in the previous Act, I created play scripts because I sought to reflect some of the engagement I felt when working with learners on this individualised programme, and to make the thesis accessible and engaging. In order to create the play scripts, I analysed what each participant said, identifying the strongest aspects of the emerging interpretation, imagining scenarios that might lead to what they said and putting that embodiment into words in the form of a play script. The play script collection, (*Voices from the edge: Crossing borders)* can be found in Appendix 1) and individual scripts are referred to throughout this and subsequent Acts. Table 1 (below) summarises participant information, states which research themes emerged most prominently from the research discussions with each individual, and gives the title of the script for each participant. It serves as an introduction to the participants and reference point. The reader might choose to read all scripts at once, or individual scripts throughout the Act, perhaps when the analysis prompts reference to one participant or their particular script.

I begin the analysis by taking each research theme in turn, summarizing my interpretations and making reference to specific individuals to exemplify my point, to support or deepen the analysis. Throughout, I cross-reference to pertinent play scripts and also include pertinent play script extracts, along with transcript extracts, to support and illustrate certain points. Throughout the Act, I attempt to capture and convey something of each participant's 'vital spark' (Lee, 2009, p. 3).

Following analysis using the research themes, I consider instances of personal, professional and organisational impact, and also where and why it was difficult to recognise. Additionally, signs of societal impact – imagined or enacted – are identified. During the analysis, my understanding developed, giving rise to further points which seemed valuable to consider, such as collaboration. Such points are noted in this Act. I also used habitus, capital and field to help with understanding of differences in participants' experiences and the nature and extent of impact.

Table 1 Participant information

Participant	Background information	Focus of studies/ research	Research themes emerging in discussions	Title of play script and other information
Callum	Previous study: BA Hons. Fine Art (full time) Language processing disability. Received study mentor support during undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Internship with local council; volunteer at charity working with young people with disabilities.	Began MA programme with free module as part of graduate employability programme. Initially aimed to achieve PGCE. Subsequently decided to continue to Masters. Research: project investigated the views and experiences of volunteers, clients' parents and carers regarding the facilities offered by the charity, and development opportunities for volunteers.	Equality; personal impact; creativity	*Follow your passion* Took but did not use notebook but brought notes made with Siri to second research discussion.
Jack	Previous study: BA Hons. Drama (full time). Previous employment: Voluntary Service Overseas At time of research: university librarian; was successful in application for a position abroad, which he was due to begin after the research ended.	Research: how to meet the information literacy needs of international students.	Critical reflection; Thirdspace; personal, professional and organisational impact	*Future reflections* Jack participated with Willa, me, and another recent Masters graduate, in presenting at an international conference on lifelong learning.
Willa	Previous study: BA Hons in Work based learning (part time distance learner), completed shortly before continuation to Masters Employment: university	Research: investigation into the reasons for students' negative feedback for an undergraduate module in Willa's faculty	Thirdspace, personal and professional development	*Inspiration blossoms* Willa participated with Jack, me and another recent Masters graduate, in presenting at an international conference on

	administrator			lifelong learning. Following completion of her studies, was accepted onto Aurora, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education's national leadership programme for women working in HE Used several pages of notebook.
Lance	Previous study: Full time BSc twenty years earlier. Previous employment: technical posts in the private sector Current employment: university support services manager	Research: quality assurance of learning resources at the university in which he worked	Equality, critical reflection, professional and organisational impact	*We can work it out* Took but did not use notebook, but prepared notes for second discussion.
Thomas	Previous study: postgraduate award from private learning provider, for which he received academic credit when registering for the Masters programme in work based learning. Employment: logistics manager in an oil company in Africa.	Research: how to improve his company's logistics	Creativity; critical reflection; organisational impact	*Adjusting logistics* Shared office with two colleagues. Lived with two brothers. Was a church pastor. Research discussions via Skype and emailed notes he sent in place of second research discussion, when technical problems prevented a second Skype discussion.

Justin	Previous study: BA Hons. Geography several years earlier. Several further courses undertaken via various opportunities at previous workplaces. Employment: University support services manager	Research: investigation of self-help resources to support students' health	Equality; critical reflection; Thirdspace	*Once upon a time, we'd cracked it* Interested in doctoral study, but imminent further specific workplace training suggested immediate embarkation on doctoral study was unlikely.

Table 1 Participant information

The play scripts are located in Appendix 1 *Voices from the edge: Crossing borders*

Analysing the data according to research themes

As indicated in Act 2, I selected several research themes through which I would analyse participants' experience of work based learning, and these were Thirdspace, equality, creativity and critical reflection. Each theme is treated as a constituent of work based learning, and considered in turn, followed by consideration of impact. The further concepts of habitus, field and capital are then utilised.

Clough's (2002) approach suggests that two perspectives are needed in analysis. One considers the participants themselves, what they say/ do not say; how they behave, and so on, and what this reveals of 'patterns created in the mind in another time' (p. 64). The second requires one 'to look more closely at the narratives which organise our own experience' (p. 64), and consider how one situates the research not merely in the institutional or professional context, but also in relation to values and perceptions relating to one's experience. Both perspectives were used in the following analysis.

Each of the following sections begins with a brief re-consideration of the theme, followed by analysis of the data, using my interpretations presented in *Voices from the edge: Crossing borders* (Appendix 1), data referenced here from the research discussions, and also knowledge and perceptions gained from working with the participants as their tutor. The analysis includes extracts from the play scripts, which provide illustrations of particular points. As indicated earlier, Andrews's (2013) argument, that there is no one perfect analysis, and that re-visitation of the data at different times or by different people will lead to different interpretations and analyses, is relevant. I present the interpretations and analysis that emerged for me at the time of my research and subsequently.

Thirdspace

As outlined in the Literature Review, the concept of 'Thirdspace' (Soja 1996, p. 2) or 'Third Space' (Bhaba 1994, p. 53) is pertinent. In attempting to understand learners' study experience one can consider the extent to which it is 'a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances and meanings' (Soja 1996, p. 2). It was interesting to see signs of uncertainty, of 'inbetween' or marginal positions, of opportunities for thinking differently, openly, for development and challenge. Bhaba's (1994) interest in crossing points, synthesised with consideration of Firstspace and

Secondspace, provided a perspective with which to view participants' encounters with their studies, their strategies for dealing with consequent or perceived requirements, and how this was informed by other experiences, their values, their imagination. I wondered whether, in leaving the Thirdspace of work based learning, if or how participants contemplated previous experiences; if they perceived their Firstspace as a position which could never be returned to, due to study experiences and associated changes in thinking; how they viewed their imagined Secondspace, and whether there was a sense of loss, as the Thirdspace of this phase of work based learning ended.

Bhaba (1994) opens his work by considering borders: the uncertainty of what lies 'beyond' (p. 1) and the possibility of redefining one's identity through not yet being there; of establishing collaboration; of questioning the subjectivities that lead to particular perceptions of societal categories such as gender, race, and class. This opportunity might be denied politically, or might only be realised through conflict. However, a consensual, constructive experience might be fashioned, where 'newness' (p. 10) and desire for reshaping society, interrupting one's assumptions and concepts, can be experienced. Bhaba (1994) suggests both a border, or boundary, and a bridge, which, he suggests, recognises what has been left behind but also movement, through confusion, and a wish to 'join', or for 'social solidarity' (p. 27). The crossing of the bridge might be negative or positive, as viewed by the agents, and viewed 'from a distance' negatively or positively, through different material or conceptual positions (for example, feminism).

I now consider these aspects that Soja (1996) and Bhaba (1994) have led me to see as integral to the concept of Thirdspace (uncertainty; marginalisation; thinking differently; a sense of loss) in relation to what participants told me of their work based learning experience.

Several participants expressed uncertainty relating to their studies, caused at different times for different reasons (not all uncertainties might have been shared with me, either because they were not perceived as relevant or such reference might not have complemented the image a participant wished to present). Some uncertainties were temporary and explicit, while troubling at the time. A couple of participants expressed uncertainty about the application process and early stages of the course. For example, Thomas doubted his application to the programme would be successful, but appeared to trust the university's judgement that he met the requirements. Jack's uncertainty

related to his recognition of the significance of critical reflection in assignments, a skill with which he felt unfamiliar. They each sought to border cross within the hegemonic relationship: the university decides who to admit, and method, focus and criteria for assessment. However, Jack also demonstrated how border-crossing offered opportunity (and not just negative uncertainty) as he prepared to take up a new post, seeking to fashion it (and redefine his role) so it became possible to implement ideas from his studies and associated experiences (such as his involvement in the lifelong learning conference). This perception of Jack led me to recognise similarities with Bourdieu's habitus, as Bourdieu (1982/ 1987/ 1990) himself characterised it (noted in Act 2), referring to his making the most of chance opportunities. *Future Reflections* (Appendix 1) was the play script I wrote to represent aspects of my analysis of Jack's story, and in it I sought to convey my recognition of Jack's engagement with opportunity**.** The following extract in particular illustrates this.

Jack: Making the most of opportunities

MARK Yeah, possibly something to work with – your main job is as librarian, remember.

JACK (*Nods*) For sure. But I think the course – well, my managers are using some of the ideas that came out of my research now – and that was about libraries – and international students, but other things I've done associated with it – like presenting at a conference about lifelong learning – help me think outside the box, explore other aspects.

STEVE Good words, Jack. I think your approach will be quite different from your predecessor's. Mark?

MARK Indeed. Tell you what, Jack, how about if you come up with your plan to help the students use reflection, send it to us, and also think about how you can incorporate it into your main duties?

JACK (*Smiling*) I'm on it! In fact, (*turning to* STEVE) that conference I'm just back from? (*Looks questioningly at* STEVE*, who nods*). Well, it gave me even more ideas, and yes, I could adapt them for the children – long-term approaches. Could fit the school's philosophy of lifelong learning.

Extract from *Future reflections* (Appendix 1)

Strategies for dealing with uncertainty were considered and various: having realised he was unfamiliar with aspects of the course approach and assessment criteria, Lance developed a procedure whereby he only submitted formative work once confident he had met the requirements as fully as he could. Willa's doubt about whether she could

find an appropriate topic for her research project was eased into useful action by discussion with a fellow student and a tutor. These are further examples of participants seeking acceptance according to the prevailing power structure. Bhaba (1994) recognises the political and material inequality of the margins, but also indicates a wish to challenge this, referring to Arendt's assertion that we become equal through deciding strongly that all in the group have equal rights. Some participants asserted such rights. With some, such as Jack when negotiating his new job description, my perception is that their excitement, and adventurous spirit, facilitated positive border crossing. Unfamiliarity was not necessarily a negative experience. For example, Justin's love of learning (Scene 2 *Once upon a time we'd cracked it*, Appendix 1*)* might in part be a love of the excitement of unfamiliarity (alongside an expectation that understanding and familiarity will develop).

Regarding marginalisation, the literature considered in Act 2 might focus on the negative aspects of this concept, considering people who politically or socially have materially or conceptually inferior positions. Callum perhaps fitted most closely with that perspective: his internship at the charity he researched made him more of an outsider than had he been an employee; the focus of his research - volunteering in a charity for the disabled - could be seen as marginal in nature: disability can appear socially and politically insignificant in the United Kingdom, despite articulation of equality through, for example, cultural events such as the Invictus Games, an event which is held in different countries, but was created and is championed by a member of the British royal family, and referenced in British media (Invictus Games Foundation, 2016) and the increased media coverage of the Paralympics over the last few Olympiads. In addition, Callum's fear of asking people to participate in his research could be connected to a marginalised or unclear role in the organisation. In the play script I wrote relating to Callum (*Follow your passion*, Appendix 1) I wished to convey my perception of this; his persistence nevertheless in seeking participants, and also his strong wish to facilitate equality, despite (apparently) an absence of encouragement from his manager.

In contrast, other participants seemed to be able to fashion positive opportunities from being marginal, or in-between. Jack, for example, seemed to strongly identify the possibilities of shaping his new job to fit with his interests and values, and to feel that before he actually began the job was a good time to take this action. Willa perhaps felt in-between as she developed a new type of involvement in research, now that she was

no longer taking a course that required it, and began to think of management and leadership roles through her involvement with Aurora (as portrayed in Scene 2, *Inspiration blossoms*, which is the play script I wrote about Willa). She too was taking steps that her marginal position allowed.

As to whether work based learning could be linked to thinking differently, a further aspect of Thirdspace, all participants referred to thinking or approaching things differently as a result of their studies. Thomas explained part of this to be a result of encountering the cultural web (as indicated in his play script, *Adjusting logistics*, Scene 1 (Appendix 1), and as the extract below highlights) and also to constantly bringing to work ideas from studies, and considering experiences in work in his studies – a continuous development of insights and understandings, through interchange between Firstspace experience and Secondspace ideas. I sought to convey this in *Adjusting logistics.* The extract which follows conveys much of what Thomas actually said about how his studies led to new perspectives, which in turn led to new practice. A critical theorist perspective on this might consider how the extract indicates the conservative nature of the work based learning course he was taking, that it facilitated a worker's compliance with the social order through his developed understanding. That might be so. I suggest the extract also indicates how, in Thomas's continuous learning, with studies and experience informing each other as Dewey (1938) had discussed, he is weakening alienation, finding means to influence work practice at strategic level.

Thomas: Cultural web thinking and impact

THOMAS I think it's good. It gives me a better understanding of this place.

HENRY What do you mean?

THOMAS (*Spreads his hands*) The organisation. Most of the time we look at it from our own point of view, what we (*pointing to himself, and to* HENRY *and* WILLIAM) think should happen -

WILLIAM Yes?

THOMAS - from the worker's point of view. But now I can think of taking it from the management point of view, (*pointing out of the office*) what they want to achieve, their vision of the organisation.

HENRY So, where does the cultural web come in?

THOMAS Just there! We come with our own culture, values, belief system, but have to adjust to the culture of the organisation, to be able to achieve what the organisation wants. You must understand what that culture is. So, here's an opportunity to go back and read much more on issues, on corporate culture, from the point of view of the organisation.

HENRY (*Purses his lips, thinking*) Is it worth it?

WILLIAM Well, it will be if he gets his Masters! (*Laughs*)

THOMAS Yes, it is worth it. It gives you a different perspective. Look, at the moment I'm writing about length of contracts, and terms and conditions, and I'm reading about other approaches, and they could work here, making transport and delivery more reliable.

HENRY OK. I get that (*thoughtfully*). Sounds relevant.

Extract from *Adjusting logistics* (Appendix 1)

Firstspace and Secondspace thinking was demonstrated when learners looked back on pre-course perspectives, approaches, and experiences, and thought to the actual or imagined future. For example, Willa made reference to her undergraduate studies, the development obtained/required for Masters level study, and her 'surveying the scene' as she entered a new Thirdspace with the Aurora programme and conducted research in her job rather than studies (see *Inspiration blossoms*); Lance compared his management approach prior to his studies to his current one ('I'd have been flatter about it. I wouldn't have had the depth.'), and appeared to have transferred almost immediately into Secondspace, as he started to realise the ideas he had thought of during his studies

regarding the team he managed. This is a perception I sought to convey in the play script I wrote for Lance, *We can work it out* (Appendix 1) in which he was prompted to new ideas and possible strategies (in both scenes) by members of his team; Jack recognised his development through critical reflection, and his continuing development as he anticipated his 'Secondspace' and manipulated it to fit his values and interests, alongside leaving a 'legacy' in his old place of work, almost implementing vicariously a Secondspace for others to imagine.

Thinking differently might be illustrated by Willa's experience of a change in interest and communication with colleagues over research, which perhaps illustrates Soja's (1996) 'thirding-as-Othering' (p. 60) in which an 'other-than' position is perceived, rather than there being a restricted binary choice. Willa appeared to be moving into an 'other-than' position – neither researcher only nor administrator only, but one which combined elements of both. I perceive Willa's engagement in research to have occasioned the disordering Soja (1996) refers to. Soja (1996) suggests this is a developmental process, with no closure ever complete, but instead a further stage of knowledge on which to build. While Jack appeared comfortable to be in this flow, actively seeking to shape the future direction, Willa seemed less comfortable. However, these different perceptions might arise more from my interpretation of their communication style. For example, Jack conveyed relative ease with uncertainty, while Willa was perhaps more likely to consider how to reach an endpoint. Yet, in finding how to reach endpoints, Willa undertook further thirding-as-Othering (through, for example, the Aurora programme, her openness to working with her line manager on enabling her research interest to continue, her participation in the lifelong learning conference referred to in Table 1). Such differences could link with habitus (a concept considered below). In *Inspiration blossoms* (Willa) and *Future reflections* (Jack) (Appendix 1), I tried to convey aspects of their different approaches to dealing with the open-ended nature of development, Jack 'seizing' (or creating) opportunities; Willa creating them in more measured ways**.**

My data interpretation and analysis led me to appreciate Soja's (1996) suggestion that 'thinking trialectically [i.e. in terms of Firstspace, Secondspace and Thirdspace] is a necessary part of understanding' (p. 70); I imagine that my understanding of the world, and of my position and values, socially, culturally, economically, politically, is informed by my cognizance of the connections between my Firstspace experiences, my Thirdspace perceptions and reactions, and my Secondspace imaginings of the future.

My idealist values (such as wishing for openness and opportunity) appear suited to Soja's (1996) conception of Thirdspace, as a 'limitless composition of lifeworlds that are radically open and openly radicalizable' (p. 70) – there are many experiences and perceptions of experience possible. I appreciate Soja's (1996) reference to political import, which seems a means to inject a critical perspective on such idealistic values. This appears challenging. I note my lack of critical understanding of equality, for example, and how strong the influence of my Firstspace has been for much of my life, constraining the potential opportunity of Thirdspace, and restraining Secondspace thinking. Similarly, participants might have felt restrained, or chose to restrain themselves: for all of us, there are limits. I perceive that in my practice, I can support an opening up of 'lifeworlds', but it is the learner's responsibility to choose their response and engagement.

Of all the participants, perhaps Callum and Lance showed most evidence of the 'search for emancipatory change and freedom from domination' (p. 70), which Soja (1996) argues is guided by the lifeworlds we imagine or perceive when thinking trialectically. Thus, Lance (although working within the social order of his employing organisation) appeared to wish to operate according to an inclusive style of managing his team, where members' views contributed to the team's development. His relation of that to organisational context, considering what the Human Resources department might offer (see *We can work it out*, Appendix 1), seems to be an example of triple loop learning (Tosey, Visser & Saunders, 2011), or third order organisational learning, with Lance perhaps investigating some aspects of organisational purposes and principles, as discussed by Tosey et al (2011). In *Follow your passion*, I tried to convey Callum's strong wish for change in the charity – for both clients and volunteers and more generally, for those with a disability in society (see below) . Aspects of his thinking could connect with Wall's (2016) wish for consideration of deeper power structures in work based learning.

For all, the sense of loss relating to completion of their studies appeared minimal, perhaps because they were taking on new challenges. While Lance worried he might lose what he had learned, he also said that finishing was like a 'breath of fresh air'. Perhaps he so quickly set himself further challenges in terms of developing his team that he had little loss of stimulation. Similarly, although Willa appeared to miss her clear role as a researcher, a sense of loss might be mitigated by her engagement in research through her work role, as well as taking on new intellectual challenges through the Aurora programme. Such changes in her role, and her thinking about it, might illustrate

the 'radically distributed selfhood', which Beckett (2013, p. 76) suggests contains various identities, influencing our self-reflection, and effecting changes in practice.

Socio-political contextual factors influence learners' experience of Thirdspace. The work based learning programme considered here has potential opportunity for personal exploration and insight, alongside an expectation of learners' autonomy, which might increase the 'dis-ease' (Soja 1996, p. 6) felt. Such possibilities are constrained by organisational and sector requirements (relating to level, amount and period of learning required or allowed), which are influenced by the wider socio-political context (such as the nationally-applicable level descriptors for each level of study as set out in the Regulated Qualifications Framework (Benson, 2015; Ofqual, 2015)). Thus, although the data collected and my interpretation of it suggests that the programme does allow exploration, and does prompt new ways of thinking that fit with Thirdspace, this occurs within a specific socio-cultural context, which limits the range of Thirdspace experiences possible.

Further socio-political dimensions exist in the competitive environment in which higher education institutions operate, with the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) offering a means to gauge performance (Department for Education, 2017). A desire to maintain or improve the rating of one's organisation (whether as decided by TEF or in the various league tables produced by United Kingdom media) informs organisational policies and procedures, alongside other concerns, with retention and completion significant priorities (Marshall, 2017). A critical theorist perspective might note the limitations such dimensions might impose on learners (for example, through assessment procedures and criteria, and costs to the learner). A more critical exploration of learners' experience of work based learning, giving more consideration to such limitations might be facilitated with participants with a different profile, particularly non-completers. Such an investigation holds interest and relevance for future research.

Thirdspace appears to be a relevant metaphor with which to consider learning experiences. While Kalua (2009) considers the concepts of Thirdspace and liminality at a socio-cultural level, his approach, and his reference to Bhaba (2004) is relevant to individual experience. The idea of a time 'when the past has lost its grip and the future has not yet taken definite shape' (Turner, cited in Kalua 2009, p. 24) might be heavily uncomfortable for some (as I think it was for me during my undergraduate studies)

while for others it triggers both excitement, with a focus on possibility rather than risk, and empowerment, as one seeks to influence the imminent shape of what is to come. My perception is that, despite (and/ or within) these socio-political factors, Thirdspace offers a place within which to effect one's assumptions of equality.

Equality

As indicated in Act 2, my consideration of equality is informed by Rancière's (1987/1991) perception of emancipation. His concepts of 'citizen' and 'reasonable man' (p. 91) facilitated analysis regarding the nature of individuals' perception of, and effecting of equality, as I will now consider. It was not expected that work based learning experiences had involved an upturning of the social order.

However, there were signs that for some participants an upturning of the social order, if not fully enacted, was certainly wished for. Callum not only felt he had defied labels put upon him since schooldays concerning disability, and defied the limited expectations expressed regarding his achievements, but these feelings and experiences appeared to link to thoughts about opportunities for equal engagement in work by the disabled. His experience strengthened these thoughts, his research informed them. Such thinking connects with societal transformation: 'I mean, who told them that they can't work? They're entitled to work.'

Perhaps the experience of seeing himself as equal to others achieving Masters had given Callum confidence to question the common positioning of the disabled in our society (or to articulate questions he had held for some time). Conducting the research led to appreciation of the depth of his perspective, whereas as a tutor this might not have been visible to me, or, if it was, I would have paid it fleeting attention due to the apparent lack of consequent action. Callum perhaps exemplifies Garnett's (2013) view that considering the relationship between work and learning can connect with a deep perspective on the 'human condition' (p. vi). My experience indicates action does not necessarily follow from work based learning studies for a number of reasons. Writing the play script for Callum (*Follow your passion*, Appendix 1) led me to appreciate that one reason, relevant here, is the fact that the desired action might require upturning of the social order, and that, as Tosey et al (2011) suggest, triple loop learning is not always welcomed. In addition, Callum's position within the organisation and the socio-political context make such upturning even more unlikely. The following extract from

Follow your passion references the conflict possible between a learner's values and understandings, and the social order. It makes me mindful of difficulties that can exist when seeking to implement change in one's organisation.

Callum: No impact?

CALLUM (*smiling*) Cool. True. But, did you know that Paul's great at cartoons? We could get the clients involved as well. Who says they can't do things just 'cos they're disabled? If they get the things they need, it'll be amazing what they can do. (*Stops, looking at* MARY *expectantly*)

MARY (*Looking down at the front of the report, then leafing through it*) Very true, Callum. (*Sighs*) Thank you very much, Callum. Yes, you gave it to me the same day we heard the arts centre is closing.

CALLUM Oh yes. That was bad. Er, so my report … the recommendations. Opportunities … er …

MARY Definitely. Very interesting, Callum. Your ideas would be very satisfying for those groups of people. (*Smiles at Callum*)

CALLUM Thank you. Is it useful? Here?

MARY Useful? (*Raises eyebrows, pauses*) Well, a good question. Thing is, Callum, these things take time – if there was more money, then certainly!

Extract from *Follow your passion* (Appendix 1)

In comparison, Lance, in a role which conferred some control over implementing his values in the workplace, appeared to be seeking to establish an arena of equality in his team, through listening and responding to members' questions and concerns rather than discounting them; sharing his assignments if they appeared relevant (as indicated in *We can work it out*, Appendix 1). My perception is that Lance's habitus equipped him with a confidence to persist with his approach: perhaps once one is mindful of the potential of 'edifying conversations' (Gibbs 2013b, p. 172), one has a strategy to continue seeking collaboration rather than becoming directive. To aim for equality in his team, facilitating supportive conditions, seems to fit with working 'towards the shared goals of democratic rule' (Bhaba, 1994, p. xviii) within 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' (p. xiv). Writing *We can work it out* led me to the deeper elements of work and learning considered earlier, alluded to by Garnett (2013), as writing *Follow your passion* had done with Callum. Lance's approach seemed to fit with that of Rancière's 'emancipatory

teacher' (2010, p. 6), who assumes equality and forces the student (i.e. team member) to behave equally. Within the existing social order, Lance appeared to have sufficient political capital to effect the desired emancipation, unlike Callum.

The following extract from *We can work it out* illustrates Lance's work towards collaboration in his team.

Lance: We can work it out – how?

LANCE That's what I was just telling Mark – people are a bit worried about their jobs, whether we'll keep the team going. I'm picking up there might have been a few fractious moments due to stress over nothing.

GARY Really? So, you're going to knock heads together?

LANCE (*Frowns*) Seriously? (*Turns to* MARK) Mark, don't listen to him. That's not my approach – or this organisation's. Thanks, Mark. You've given me something to think about (*pauses, looking at* MARK) – past experiences. Turning situations round. Hmm. I'll come back to the team in the next couple of days. Can we leave it there for now?

MARK (*Unsure, but wishing to sound positive*) Sound. Thanks.

LANCE See you later.

MARK *leaves.*

GARY What was all that about?

LANCE Oh, new team nerves, I guess. People not getting on that well, although they're all doing a good job. I'll maybe speak to HR, see if they've got anything about sharing critical reflection, maybe writing it down, sharing anonymously.

GARY Like I said, there's always knocking heads together

LANCE But if they're fearful, and misinterpreting behaviour… I want the best for them.

GARY OK. Well, it'll be interesting to see what you find out from HR.

Extract from *We can work it out* (Appendix 1)

In contrast, the strong sense of equality that emerged from Justin's story seemed to be accompanied by some perplexity, as I tried to convey in the play script I wrote relating to Justin: *Once upon a time, we'd cracked it* (Appendix 1). He appeared to value the opinions and approaches of all – the staff in his team, the students with whom he worked, other students and colleagues he encountered, and hold an assumption of

equality. This led to philosophical consideration of appropriate action to take, such as whether one should support student autonomy by taking an extreme approach in increasing accessibility, which might encourage passivity, thereby not transforming the social order, but maintaining dependence and students' reliance on staff to make it easy to gain support. These elements of their stories led me to perceive that Callum, Lance and Justin appeared in different ways to question the social order, seeking to upturn it, albeit within limits. Perhaps all three were enacting (to some extent) or imagining (in Callum's case) what Wall (2016) suggests work based learning literature should consider: the disruption of 'inequalities or social injustices in the workplace' (p. 6). I suggest this because each questioned the status quo. through words, actions, or both. Lance said he was trying to establish a collaborative, equal climate amongst his team, where they did not feel they had to compete with each other. He told of some of the challenges to this approach, some from team members, and some from colleagues elsewhere, who did not perhaps understand (or maybe value) it. Both types of challenge are portrayed in Lance's play script, *We can work it out* (Appendix 1). Justin told in the research discussions of the different approaches and perspectives he had taken when trying to develop strategies to address work place issues (at the time, the predominant issue relating to his studies was development of effective resources and strategies relating to mental health support), valuing his colleagues' and students' ideas and opinions strongly. Such an enactment of equality seemed to make it difficult to move on to definite decisions.

Consideration of Callum's challenging of the social order, leads into discussion of 'reasonable man' and 'citizen' (Rancière, 1987/1991, p. 91), to which all participants' stories made reference. That Callum perhaps portrayed Rancière's (2010) perception of the individual 'verifying their equality' (p. 15), and recognising the dissonance between 'ways of being and ways of doing' (p. 91) is suggested by his consideration in the research discussions of a number of points relating to equality. For example, he questioned what his teachers from school would say if they learned of his academic success, when, he suggested, they assumed he accomplished little at school through lack of engagement. He now recognised his capabilities (and thus, I suggest, his equality with others – the reasonable man) while also recognising that others hold different views (the citizen). This self-awareness seemed strongly connected to what he said about disabled people's right to work, and the need to support volunteers' and clients' development (reasonable man). At the same time, he recognised the financial constraints of the organisation he worked for and appeared to understand his manager's

priorities being elsewhere (citizen). This latter point I tried to convey in Scene 2 of *Follow your passion* (Appendix 1).

For Willa, the two concepts seemed to be a troublesome dichotomy encapsulated in consideration of her role regarding research and associated discussions and perceptions. Her research had crossed a border between academic and administrative staff roles and expectations. As a citizen Willa turned to focus on her administrative role while knowing as a reasonable 'woman' she was capable of other roles. Her way forward seemed to be to seek ways to incorporate research into her current role, and also to continue crossing other borders through participation in the Aurora programme, which supports women entering management and leadership in higher education (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, 2018). In contrast, Callum seemed to accept his role as citizen, understanding there was little prospect of immediate change in either the social order generally or within the charity he researched, alongside holding a strong perception of equality.

Jack perhaps made least reference to the citizen role, and seemed to be most fully engaged in enacting the reasonable man, influencing both his current and future employers with his views and knowledge, to fashion what he perceived to be effective situations. For his current employers this meant better resourcing for international students; for his imminent employers this involved provision concerning critical reflection and lifelong learning. In comparison with Callum, verification of equality was perhaps easier for Jack regarding his new job. If his managers were willing to adapt to 'ignorance' then there was space for Jack's equal position. In my paper (Appendix 2/ Scott, 2017) I considered Rancière's (1987/1991) 'ignorant schoolmaster' and suggested that a manager's effecting of ignorance might support workers' emancipation (without which the potential for autonomy and equality would be lessened). Perhaps Jack and his new employers were working in equal ignorance in some respects (see *Future reflections*, Appendix 1), as, perhaps, were Justin and his colleagues, and as Lance might have been as he went through the process of establishing equality.

Thomas moved on from a citizen role, where he perceived dependency on his tutor, and a difference in perceptions of work priorities from his senior managers, to the reasonable man, who made suggestions about teaching resources to me, and participated in strategic meetings with senior managers at work. His reference to the cultural web as a concept that helped him understand the managers' perspective, and

his discussion about this with colleagues, perhaps illustrates his management of the two positions, alongside how views of equality might develop collaboratively (see *Adjusting logistics*, Appendix 1).

Thus, synthesis of citizen and reasonable man might be constructive. However, Justin's story could indicate the potential for conflict if one feels both positions strongly (as suggested in Scene 1 *Once upon a time, we'd cracked it* (Appendix 1)). I perceived that Justin was reluctant to select certain suggestions (thereby rejecting others, which could then be seen as inferior) in developing strategies to support students, although this was needed in order to take action.

The perceptions considered above suggest experience of equality can develop or change according to context and individual, and that emancipation can be incomplete, yet still be transformative. This seems to be an argument for moderation of Rancière's (1987/1991) stance in order to understand individual, specific positions in terms of equality. For example, I sense that Callum's decision to take a 'gap year', following completion of his studies; to take responsibility for renovating a house, and his recognition of successfully tackling a personal fear to ask for research participants, might well have been emancipatory – if not with overt, external evidence, then in terms of self-image and self-confidence. Explication might be another element in which moderation of Rancière's (1987/1991) is appropriate. While his argument that explication perpetuates inequality is one I understand, my research suggested that explication can be temporary, and two-way. For example, Jack illustrated how one might enter into a learning stage, and in the gaining of the learning, apply it and move on. He showed that relations of equality could change: he might have been my superior during his studies, with me dependent on his needing my explication; however, that state no longer existed. Similarly, Thomas had moved from dependency on my explication of research methodology to advising me on teaching and learning resources, and indicating his application of his learning from his studies. These temporary states are still positioned within an overarching social order, in which academic qualifications are valued, and may confer some material or cultural advantages: points which might be more fully considered with a critical theorist perspective.

I perceive that studying gave all participants a vehicle for effecting equality; that some appeared to be implementing it; that others appeared limited in so doing, either due to their socio-political circumstances (as in the case of Callum) or in their apparent

reluctance to limit equality and assert their decision-making role (as – possibly – with Justin). Participants' varied experiences, thoughts and enactments of equality are examples of different personalities and life experiences. However, they also prompted consideration of concepts that might offer some articulation of these differences, such as those offered by Bourdieu (1997/2000): field, capital and habitus are considered later.

Creativity is the next concept to be explored in this analysis. As indicated below, there were examples of creativity being used in the effecting of equality.

Creativity

As indicated in Act 2, creativity is significant in work and work based learning. Robinson (2017) suggests that when individuals, organisations and learning providers take responsibility for cultivating creativity, a potentially transformative impact can occur: new perspectives can be gained, unfamiliar ideas and concepts imagined, innovation devised. It was pertinent to consider to what extent participants' experiences resonated with Robinson's ideas, in particular with his suggestion that creativity comprises three stages (imagination, creativity and innovation) and also with his consideration of creative leaders and organisations. Collaborative creativity is also discussed, as it emerged as pertinent for some participants' experience.

Robinson (2011) indicates the possible freeing from constraints that creativity allows, and Callum might best illustrate this. Given his Fine Art background, and reference to visual diary experience during that course, I anticipated creative use of the notebook in between research discussions, but instead Callum used his phone, speaking thoughts that his Siri voice assistant transcribed to notes. This was creative and appropriate; it minimised his language processing disability slowing him down. Evidence of creativity emerged through unexpected strategies, and seemed to illustrate a freeing from constraints, supporting the view that '[n]o one needs to be a victim of their own biography' (Kelly, cited in Robinson, 2011, p. 166). Rather differently, Jack's creative preparation for his new job seemed to be helping him avoid being constrained by his job description. Both Jack and Callum, in different ways were imagining 'possible futures' (Robinson, 2017, p. 129).

Justin made no overt reference to creativity, although perhaps his approval of PhD students changing their minds regarding their focus and approach in their studies (as

conveyed in *Once upon a time we'd cracked it*, Appendix 1) indicated a general appreciation of keeping routes open to accommodate the unanticipated, and thus (perhaps) creativity. Although when considering creative organisations, Robinson (2017) suggests that suppleness, responsiveness, ability to 'flex' (p. 203) between diverse ideas and disciplines all support creativity, he also argues that on the personal level, each individual has creative strengths, which might be realised when one finds one's route, or the medium which suits one – rather than eternally anticipating that something more interesting will turn up. I feel that Justin expected (eventually) to find his medium in terms of further studies and their focus, and expected to recognise this and settle to it. Outside of the research discussions, as Justin's tutor, I perceived his creative research approaches (such as synthesising secondary and primary research).

As indicated above (and below, when impact is considered) Callum's practical application of his ideas was limited; he had not yet achieved the stages of creativity Robinson (2017) outlines beyond the first: that of imagining possible futures. Jack, in contrast, appeared to reach the second and third stages: creativity ('applied imagination' (p. 129), or 'developing original ideas that have value' (p. 2)) and innovation ('putting new ideas into practice' (p. 2)) in both his current job and preparations for his new job. Perhaps Willa's creativity (for example, in resource management; in instigating discussions with colleagues and students) could have been explored more fully. Lance appeared to be applying ideas and learning from his studies creatively in supporting his developing team, making connections, for example, between the difficulties experienced by one member, and extracts from one of his assignments. Thomas appeared to appreciate the opportunity the programme allowed for creative approaches which enabled one to study where, how and when one wished.

Regarding creativity and leadership, Justin and Lance both have formal recognition of their leadership role in their job descriptions, so Robinson's (2017) principles of practice for creative leaders appeared relevant, as both participants had indicated that innovation in their team was sought and possible. In his wish for his team to work together more equally, Lance appeared to be encouraging their use of creativity, welcoming communication, listening to their ideas (as portrayed in *We can work it out*, Appendix 1). Justin's search for effective strategies to support troubled students was collaborative, and open to diverse views (as indicated in *Once upon a time we'd cracked it*, Appendix 1). Both seemed to work with several of the principles, in particular 'Principle 8: Creative cultures are inquiring' (Robinson 2017, p. 204), which involves

sharing one's uncertainties, mistakes, and need for help; effecting delegation, asking questions, listening, and considering others' views. Justin appeared to do this, but made little reference in the discussions to settling on approaches and outcomes. This could be because leading a team was a relatively new role for him, so the team could be at the place Robinson (2017) describes as more likely to occur in the early stages of growth, before it settles into structures and routines.

Robinson (2017) suggests that we vary in how we interpret information, as we are each influenced by our own ideas and values, and so see the world through 'a veil of conceptions' (p. 120). While such diversity can generate a large number of ideas, applied creativity involves making judgements and selecting from those ideas. Having a clear focus for our attention that helps avoid being pulled in different directions by different ideas facilitates this. It appeared that Justin might have been at the stage of generating ideas – from colleagues, students, his studies - and the next stage would be to select from them to create a strategy through which to develop the team's practice. The extract below from *Once upon a time, we'd cracked it* indicates how the generating ideas stage might be a time of uncertainty.

Justin: What do you think?

JUSTIN Well, yes, there seems to be a concern about engagement generally. I found some good stuff, really relevant - stuff that practitioners elsewhere use, but what I kept getting from the students was, 'Oh yes, that looks good, but I'm too busy. That's why I don't come to those sessions you put on.'

SEB Well, they could be busy (*spreading his hands*) – working longer hours in their part time jobs these days.

JUSTIN (*Nods*) Yes, they may be, but sometimes it means busy watching Netflix … Of course, some do, but generally, what I ended up thinking after my course was, 'How do you engage this cohort coming through?' Once upon a time we'd cracked it - it was easy to engage them. Then, social media came along. We used that. It's even post that now.

SEB (*Raising his eyebrows, sounding slightly frustrated*) Oh heck. Does anything seem to work?

JUSTIN Well, (*turning to* RACHEL) Rachel might have a view on that. Rachel, what do you think in terms of new things we're doing to try to get students to use the resources?

RACHEL Er, well, (*looking up from computer*) we did try putting those self-help links on our website, but you didn't think they were using them, did you?

JUSTIN (*Nods*) I was unsure. I thought it might not be immediate enough - this instant generation.

RACHEL Oh, yeah, so instead of sending them the link to something, we actually show them it straight away.

SEB Oh. Interesting. (*Looking at them both*) Does it work any better?

RACHEL Well, while they're with you looking at it, they might say something like, 'Oh, that's a good idea – I could try that', but you don't know … (*Shakes her head*)

Extract from *Once upon a time, we'd cracked it* (Appendix 1)

Lance's approach might have been less open than Justin's (in terms, perhaps, of sharing his uncertainties). However, he seemed to be fostering a creative culture through listening, asking questions, valuing alternatives. In doing this I think he also was working within the area of 'Principle 9: Creative cultures need creative spaces' (Robinson, 2017, p. 206). An essential element in 'allowing voices to be heard' (Adams & Owens, 2016, p. 131), which is considered further below.

Robinson (2017) leads one to think beyond individual creativity as he considers the creative leader's task of 'ensuring that everyone is playing to their creative strengths

and feels valued for their contribution to the overall performance of the organisation (p. 193). Rather than assuming creativity to lie within the remit of particular functions only, he suggests that innovation should be integral to the whole organisation: everyone has a part to play, and engagement facilitates creative thinking about improving practice.

Collaborative creativity is relevant to work based learning. Robinson (2017) indicates the importance of collaboration for diverse and dynamic creativity, and the development of creative insights. Others, such as Pässilä, Owens and Pulkki (2016) and Adams and Owens (2016) consider means to support collaborative creativity. While the participants' studies were individual to them (at least in terms of the academic award), the extent to which others were involved in any creative approaches they alluded to was relevant in terms of personal, professional and organisational impact.

Lance seemed to be offering a space for diverse views to be heard and engaged with. Pässilä, Owens and Pulkki (2016) suggest that while this might present challenges, the practice encourages collaborative (rather than only individual) creativity to address issues. Although Lance was the manager, therefore senior in the organisation's social order, his approach seemed to be to allow 'voices to be heard' (Adams & Owens, 2016, p. 131). Lance's account of his attempts to develop his team's confidence in working together (rather than feeling under threat) matched well the expectation that such edifying conversations (Gibbs, 2013b) lead to understandings pertinent to that time, not forever, and that there would be negotiation of meanings. In listening to team members, Lance seemed to be attempting to learn about others' perspectives, prepared to challenge interpretations to which they led (see *We can work it out*, Appendix 1). Lance identified that, in dealing with possible and actual team conflict, his studies have led him to be more resourceful in his work practice than previously: 'not with physical products but what's possible with my own experiences.' This suggests a connection between critical reflection and creativity. Lance and Justin both seemed to be exploring the balance between direct and open approaches to collaborative creativity, which Robinson (2017) considers.

Collaborative creativity might also occur without the apparent presence of a creative leader, as I perceived with Thomas, who shared with his colleagues information and insights gained from his studies, leading to discussions about changes to practice. This impression was gained from what he actually said in the research discussions, where he

went into detail about how useful he had found the cultural web, and had explained what he saw as its value to his colleagues. In the play script, *Adjusting Logistics*, (Appendix 1) I sought to use his actual words, setting them in a conversation with his colleagues rather than with me. Such collaboration might be supported by a creative organisational culture.

In summary, creativity impacted on how participants made use of their study experiences: some, such as Justin and Lance, in their role as leaders; others, such as Willa, Jack and Callum more individually; and some, in particular Thomas, Justin and Lance, with collaboration in mind. In some cases, there seemed an overt connection to critical reflection. For all participants, critical reflection played a part in the study experience and is considered next.

Critical Reflection

The critical perspective on the nature and consequence of critical reflection considered in Act 2 is relevant to my own practice, to learners, and to developing a questioning of the work based learning literature. Of particular significance are power relations. It is relevant in work based learning to consider the degree to which learners' engagement in critical reflection challenges personal and organisational assumptions and practices, and the resulting outcomes. Literature about collaborative critical reflection (as discussed below) raised awareness of how the individual nature of assessment in the programme considered here perhaps encouraged critical reflection to be individual rather than collaborative.

All participants appeared to have used or be using critical reflection to support personal, professional and/ or organisational development. For example, Callum appeared to use it to help him reach an acceptance of no immediate implementation of his research recommendations in the charity, and Willa's outline of her approach to her studies (and subsequently other activities), as being informed by prior experiences seemed to match certain features of critical reflection. Having considered how difficult he had first found critical reflection, Jack was implementing the potential of critical reflection to plan development, as considered by Helyer (2015b) and seemed to do this throughout his studies and beyond, using reflection on previous experiences to plan ahead. Discussions with both Willa and Jack suggested they experienced reconceptualization – Willa in her move from research to a work role in which she tried to incorporate

research, and in considering development as a manager (see *Inspiration blossoms*, Appendix 1); Jack in considering how he could enact his interest in critical reflection and lifelong learning in his new job (see *Future Reflections*, Appendix 1).

Thomas, like Jack, recognised critical reflection as significantly contributing to his experience of work based learning. He considered it as integral to his development and to having an impact on his colleagues and the company (see *Adjusting logistics*, Appendix 1); he appeared to find it easy (as did Lance) and an aid to his understanding: 'You practice, and integrate it into what you are learning, which makes it much better for you to understand what you are really learning.' Thomas appeared to welcome the applicable nature of work based learning, compared to an alternative approach based solely on textbooks. He mentioned this both in our discussion and in his emailed notes, where he wrote, '… learning was meaningful, relevant and easy to understand because the learning relates to my work environment … it links theory to what I do at work practically and focus on what I have done in terms of my role and experience in my workplace.' Here, Thomas might be demonstrating what Brinkman and Tanggaard (2013) refer to as two epistemologies: one of the eye (relating, they suggest, to individualistic values and subjectivism) and one of the hand (which references, they say, the active element of learning). Brinkman and Tanggaard (2013) suggest both epistemologies are needed for learning to effect improved conditions: the passive learning with the eye, and enactment of the learning with the hand.

Justin appreciated that reflection was a significant component of his studies; that programme expectation was not for perfection but for making use of one's mistakes and weaknesses as well as one's strengths (see Scene 2, *Once upon a time, we'd cracked it*, Appendix 1). In this appreciation, Justin recognised reflection as a tool to support learning and development, as Helyer and Kay (2015) outline. This appears to connect with a possible wish for collaborative rather than individual work and learning, and also with assumption of equality.

As I hope *Once upon a time, we'd cracked it* (Appendix 1) shows, Justin appeared to like to keep things open when contemplating approaches to work issues, his own studies and development. Maintaining such an open approach might invite further, deeper understanding and awareness. While his recognition of students' lack of engagement needed to 'move on' to action, perhaps this is a complex issue with no simple solution; perhaps his reference to exploration of the topic at doctoral level was appropriate,

setting the issue in a deeper, theoretical framework (as, for example, Zepke, 2014, has done) rather than treating it anecdotally.

Lance, Thomas and Justin's stories all indicated the presence of collaborative critical reflection, albeit differing in nature. Lance appeared to consciously engage in it, sharing his reflective work with Paula, for example, and talking to her about critical reflection, and also considering how to develop a critically reflective approach amongst the team as a whole (see *We can work it out*, Appendix 1). His creation of the space for 'voices to be heard' (Adams &Owens, 2016, p. 131) would appear to support critical reflection as well as collaborative creativity.

Justin, in his valuing of others' views, seemed to create that space for articulation of shared critical reflection. This appeared to lead to collaborative action, through constant collaboration to implement and review innovations, and the impression was that this could challenge power relations to some extent, with Justin willing to pursue colleagues' and also students' suggestions, while mindful of the overall priorities and concerns of the organisation. For Lance, collaboration across the team was still in the imagined rather than actual stage. Thomas's approach to collaboration appeared to develop informally with his colleagues in the office, perhaps indicative of his different position in the organisational hierarchy to that of Justin and Lance (in that he shared an office with colleagues on similar grades). In all three cases, these interpretations are based on what the three participants said in the research discussions, and my developing understanding as I tried to embody those interpretations in the play scripts.

As Helyer (2015b) outlines, there are formal strategies for developing reflection with the support of others, through, for example, mentoring programmes or action learning. Lance was possibly closest to developing an action learning process, as he recognised the challenges reflection can trigger when undertaken in an unplanned way. Perhaps his sharing of his critically reflective extracts and talking about what he gained from reflection was the first stage. However, he was also exploring what the Human Resources department might offer to support his team's development, and it would seem appropriate to involve them as a 'neutral' body, should he wish to develop action learning, as this activity should be undertaken between peers, rather than led by a manager (Helyer, 2015b).

Otherwise, Lance seemed also to be interested in introducing critical reflection informally, which appeared characteristic of Thomas's approach regarding his colleagues: as Thomas articulated his critically reflective thinking during informal discussions, it seemed almost inevitable that collaboration would ensue. Having experienced such situations myself, I recognise how powerful co-reflection can be for one's awareness, understanding and development, and how it can enrich one's practice, both in terms of performance effectiveness and of enjoyment and fulfilment. However, participants have to be willing and able to participate equally. My experiences took place in what could be defined as communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where continuous learning was expected and desired. Other experiences suggest that a culture of continuous learning, development and engagement cannot be assumed to occur in the workplace: 'not knowing' might be judged negatively, so one hides one's ignorance, whereas in a context of equality one can enjoy the sharing of learning. Thomas might have this positive context at work – his community of practice is aided by co-reflection, and a sharing of expectations and assumptions about work based learning's place in work and professional development (see *Adjusting Logistics*, Appendix 1) - and Lance and Justin in different ways are trying to establish such a community.

Cressey's (2006) consideration of collective reflection and learning suggests its positive potential. Top down procedures for collaborative reflection were brought in by companies wishing to improve productivity and problem-solving, and sought to embed it through non-formal connections between employees. Fook (2010) questions calls for collective critical reflection if they result from negative views of individual reflection pertaining to its apparent distance from the organisation to which the individual's reflections relate, when impact may be wished for. Instead, Fook (2010) argues for viewing the 'individual in social context' (p. 38), where one starts with the individual experience, linking it to the context, and collective application, rather than only focusing on the collective application from the start. Lance would seem to be taking this approach, beginning with sharing his own critical reflections with an individual (as conveyed in Scene 1, *We can work it out* (Appendix 1)). In addition, he spoke about how he might support the team's critical reflection, considering introducing a writing activity of some sort and a sharing of what was written.

Yukawa (2006) refers to 'co-reflection' – a 'collaborative critical thinking process' (p. 205), and considers its relationship to individual reflection. There were signs that Thomas and colleagues shared the three interactional characteristics Yukawa (2006)

says active co-reflection includes: sharing information; developing meaning and understanding together; synthesising these thoughts with fresh ideas about their work together. I think I convey this in Scene 1 *Adjusting logistics* (Appendix 1), where I use much of what Thomas told me of what he and his colleagues discussed regarding their study experiences: he gave me the impression that co-reflection was a familiar practice. Drawing on Habermas, Yukawa (2006) suggests equality among speakers is required for this shared understanding to be achieved. Høyrup and Elkjaer (2006) suggest that for reflection to be useful in the workplace, it should go beyond the individual. They see learning interweaved with and involved in 'everyday learning processes' (p. 29), thereby linking it to the social and organisational context. Thomas's contribution to senior management meetings, using his learning and arising insights, also seems to fit with Høyrup and Elkjaer's (2006) reference to organisational reflection. They suggest critical reflection might often not be viewed as relevant or useful by management, and workers might be reluctant to share arising revelations about shortcomings of the company and so on, but Thomas's company appear to wish for at least some of his knowledge and ideas to be shared, hence their inviting him to meetings over strategy, to which he referred in our discussion, and which is mentioned in the play script.

Justin spoke less about co-reflection, perhaps because his habitus and capital did not lead him to articulate his relevant actions and thoughts in the same manner as Lance and Thomas. While each questioned co-reflection, and appeared uncertain of its outcome, all three seemed to feel working with others reflectively was apt, and they had the means to do so.

In summary, my research leads me to perceive that critical reflection has potentially more power than I had in the last couple of years come to assume, and that this power might be effected in different ways. For Jack and Willa it was particularly relevant as each looked to the future; for Lance it was relevant as he worked with his team, through sharing the critical reflection he had engaged in in his studies, and also being influenced by critical reflection in his consideration of how to develop his team; for Thomas, it seemed to be a tool to use in his discussions with both his immediate colleagues and senior managers, contributing to his professional development. Perhaps each learner's use of critical reflection linked to a different aspect of development: for Thomas it might be primarily professional development, for Lance organisational development, for Jack perhaps a combination of personal and professional. This analysis makes me more conscious of how I consider reflection with learners, and that I should give collaborative

reflection more thought than I have previously done. Collaboration is likely to influence the nature and extent of impact, which is considered next.

Impact

The expectation of personal, professional and/ or organisational development expressed in the work based learning literature was considered in Act 2. The discussion so far of Thirdspace, equality, creativity and critical reflection has indicated all participants experienced such impact to some extent.

Personal impact might be subtle in its effect. For example, during the research discussions, Callum spoke independently (rather than in response to questions or suggestions) for considerably longer than when we met for study tutorials. Why was this? Callum's confidence was boosted by passing his course, and gaining a Merit (thus confirming to him, I perceive, his academic capability) and also by tackling a considerable challenge: asking people to participate in his research. The powerful language he used when describing his study experiences ('take the bullet'; 'lunge') suggested this, as did his remarks about his schoolteachers' perceptions of him: 'After all those bad experiences at school, y'know, and I've proved them wrong. I've proved them wrong and I beat it. … They think I wasn't achieving anything at all … If they can see me now, they'd go, "sorry for, sorry for doubting you".' 'Personal impact' indicates not just growth of confidence but also development of personal and social skills and capabilities, such as communication, dealing with difficult situations, supporting others (Nixon, 2008). Although such outcomes were unstated, it was likely that Callum would be more prepared to engage in challenging situations in the future. While such behaviour might not (yet) be part of his habitus, his capital has grown. I attempted to convey Callum's personal impact in *Follow your passion* (Appendix 1) through his asides or spoken thoughts, indicating his nervousness in seeking research participants, and also persistence in asking his manager about the impact his research might engender in the workplace.

Further demonstration of personal impact was Callum's expressed desire to use his achievement for others: as an inspiration – if he could achieve despite his difficulties, so could others with disabilities; and also through his research's identification of the need for funding to enable support to be specifically effective in facilitating, for individuals with varying disabilities, equal participation in work, study, and everyday activities. I

perceived his ownership of his research journey: he had taken it because he believed it to be important, and was unperturbed by external arguments that offered competing perspectives: 'Who told them that they can't work? They're entitled to work.' (See Scene 2 *Follow your passion* (Appendix 1).

In Mumford and Roodhouse's (2010) consideration of work based learning from the learner's perspective, the learners' own reflective reviews of their learning are included in the book (rather than conveyed indirectly). They convey a range of strongly felt personal impacts, and the book supports the approach taken in this thesis – to seek the details of impact, rather than just an overview.

Research discussions with other participants were also surprising regarding what they revealed about personal impact. For example, Lance spoke of the impact on his confidence in his approach, whereas I had always perceived him to be a confident, experienced manager. For Lance, this personal development linked with professional and organisational development: his studies prompted discussions with his line manager, leading to the creation of the customer services team. This linking of the personal, professional and organisational development exemplifies to some extent Fook's (2010) conception of critical reflection as an understanding of one's experience, making meaning from it, and applying that in the social context. Lance's deep approach to his practice and in his use of his studies suggested to me that he was enacting what Garnett (2013) calls for: an appreciation of the relation between work and learning that is 'fundamental to our understanding of the human condition' (p. vi). In *We can work it out* (Appendix 1) I sought to portray this synthesis of personal, professional and organisational impact, through indicating Lance's approach to dealing with concerns amongst his team members, his maintaining his approach despite a colleague's (joking) reference to something different, and his consideration of seeking support for the team's development from Human Resources (thereby taking it outside of the team). Lance indicated all such actions and thoughts in the research discussions.

Similarly, Thomas's recognition of the personal impact: 'I feel very great' connected with his (as I perceived it) stronger self-confidence and constructive involvement in management discussions. His expectation of ongoing personal and professional development might be evidenced by his reference to continuing his studies with a doctorate, which he considered with confidence. While no reference to this possible development was included in *Adjusting logistics* (Appendix 1), both scenes refer to his

involvement in management discussions, and Scene 2 refers to his growth in academic confidence. Both scenes include words very closely matching those Thomas actually used in the research discussions. Costley and Abukari (2015) cite such confidence and interest in further learning as effects often felt by work based learners, perhaps particularly when their work based learning projects are implemented in their workplace.

Willa showed a different connection between personal, professional, and organisational impact. While her professional development appeared to be underway through joining the Aurora programme (as indicated in Scene 2 *Inspiration blossoms* (Appendix 1)), she demonstrated how it was possible to combine this with other aspects of development. Churchman and King (2009) consider the conflict between organisational and private stories in higher education, suggesting that the promotion of 'spaces where multiple stories can resonate, grow and sustain identities' (p. 515) could foster creativity, and facilitate more 'diverse engagement' (p. 515). While they perceive effecting of such spaces to be the responsibility of managers, Willa showed how it might be possible for individuals to create their own spaces open to their own and others' different stories. Not referred to in the play script, but mentioned in the research discussions, was her finding a way to work with the organisational stories in her role alongside her own stories of personal and professional engagement, leading (for example) to colleagues and students becoming familiar with her engagement in conversations about research. This extract from *Inspiration blossoms* portrays an example of Willa's synthesis of personal, professional, and organisational development and, therefore, potential and actual impact.

Willa: Surveying the scene

GROUP FACILITATOR Thank you very much, Willa. You are inspirational in what you say about your inspiration! So, now we've all shared our role models, how do we use our inspiration in our careers? Moving into leadership? Willa – would you like to keep the flow going and lead us off?

WILLA (*Raising her eyebrows*) Oh, ok, if you like. Well, Helen Keller. Hmm. OK. I feel energised about my career now I've got my MA. I kept going with that, even though it was hard, planned my strategy – even had a break for a big birthday! (*Laughs*) So that gave my confidence a boost, and Aurora's doing that, too. And confidence in other people, and I'm learning how to communicate that confidence.

GROUP FACILITATOR Very thoughtful ideas, Willa. Is this leading you to career development ideas yet? Or leadership roles?

WILLA (*Smiling*) Well, I'm actually happy in my job at the moment, but I can survey the scene. Another thought I have is how I can encourage people to do what I did, or similar, and take up studying, because although it's been hard, and had frustrations, I'm over the moon that I've done it, and that's a good feeling for everyone to have about their achievements.

GROUP MEMBER Will that be hard, do you think? Encouraging people?

WILLA (*Purses lips*) Well, I might be lucky. One thing I've noted is how, when you start this programme, it's like becoming a member of a whole new community of like-minded people. It's like a special club – I belong to a club in the University that promotes learning, so I think that's quite nice, actually. So, who knows?

Extract from *Inspiration blossoms* (Appendix 1)

Study seemed to have had considerable professional impact for Jack, who attributed his success in gaining a new job to his work based learning studies. In the interview for the job he drew all examples and arguments from those studies, rather than from another course he was currently studying which was more overtly relevant to the new job (see *Future Reflections*, Appendix 1).

Lance's use of learning from his studies, in supporting development of his team and his management approach, indicate the deeper aspects of professional impact that might be possible. Notes he had made in preparation for our second meeting, led him to think about organisational behaviour, making connections between his team, his approach and the organisation (see *We can work it out*, Appendix 1). He credited his ability to do this to his studies: 'The work based degree is obviously about my experience, but it's

the reading and then writing the words that make me see things in a different view … made it more apparent to me. Rather than it just being an experience in my life. More thought provoking.' He linked his confidence in taking a more thoughtful, considered approach in conversations with his staff to his studies: 'I'd have been flatter about it. I wouldn't have had the depth. I couldn't have had the same supportive conversation, I think. Dismissive.'

While Thomas's greater involvement in company decisions might lead to formal professional development, it was already triggering informal professional development, as Thomas developed his capacity to engage in unfamiliar arenas, taking him out of his usual pattern of work through, for example, involvement in discussions on logistics strategy with senior management. Costley and Abukari (2015) refer to learners' 'productive engagement in debates relevant to the wider professional field' (p. 8) as a positive (and, they suggest, unforeseen) effect of work based learning. Costley et al (2010) suggest that the researcher's reputation, or the longstanding impression held of him by senior management will influence the extent to which one's research findings are considered. Thomas's manner throughout his studies appeared constructive, developing his work in the light of feedback. This, along with his view that it was important for a learner to have a tutor who could help him break down the more difficult parts of their learning, indicated that Thomas was an active listener. Such a skill would support the development of a positive impression at work, and the opportunity for formal professional development.

Perhaps his studies, particularly his research project, strengthened Justin's self-perception as a professional with growing knowledge and understanding of wellbeing, as exemplified in *Once upon a time we'd cracked it* (Appendix 1). Justin was instigating staff development in the organisation, which he might have done without engaging in study. However, he did say he generally only read about topics in detail when they related to a course he was taking. This suggests his studies impacted on his personal and professional development, with consequent impact for organisational development.

Willa highlighted how she had drawn on her studies considerably in her application to the Aurora programme, to which her continuing professional development was now related. She spoke about how her studies gave her confidence to 'survey the scene' regarding career development.

Regarding organisational impact, the research discussions enabled me to perceive Callum's understanding of the lack of organisational impact, whereas I might otherwise have 'fitted' the lack to the labelling I had used as his tutor: I did not expect organisational impact, largely because as his tutor, I see now, my awareness of the difficulties his disability caused him constrained my expectations. Willa's research project had a specific organisational aim in mind (improving student satisfaction on a particular course) and was designed in collaboration with relevant colleagues, although the actual impact was yet to be evinced at the time of this research, as it would be in the following academic year that her research recommendations were implemented.

Not exemplified in the play script, but referred to in the research discussions, were Jack's experiences regarding organisational impact in his current (rather than future) employment, which defied my expectations: my previous experience was that there was little synthesis of work activity and academic studies in Jack's department. A change in management, and management's growing understanding of the potentially negative impact of poor evaluation in TEF assessment, appeared to contribute to a constructive response to his research findings, with the formation of a working group, intended to address issues considered in his report. Jack asserted it was because of his undertaking of the work based learning Masters that organisational changes were being discussed. If he had tried to implement such initiatives without a link to such a course of study, his recommendations would not have been so respected. Possibly, his managers appreciated the requirements successful engagement in such a course require. Costley et al (2010) describe the growth in recognition of such higher education provision, and an appreciation of engagement in it as pertinent to professional and organisational development. However, appreciation of the value of such provision is insufficient on its own: Callum's manager, for example, might have valued Callum's research as relevant and his recommendations as constructive, but lacked resources to allow their consideration or immediate implementation. As Costley et al (2010) suggest, the nature of the organisation in which one carries out one's research, and the socio-cultural context, impact on the likelihood of the research being made use of.

Costley and Abukari (2015) suggest individuals' engagement in work based learning can trigger more generic learning about management and other aspects of work. This seemed to be the case with Jack, as he entered negotiations with his imminent employers, and with Thomas, as he considered the effectiveness of work practices following his introduction to the cultural web in his studies. Perhaps in keeping with my

perception of Thomas's comfortable use of Secondspace, his studies seemed to be having organisational impact, both at senior and lower levels.

As a manager, Lance perhaps had more opportunity to effect organisational development than others. His approach included preparedness to facilitate others' personal and professional development. However, he spoke of his perception of having limited impact outside his immediate team. He believed there was little available at organisational level to support staff development relevant to his immediate concerns (as indicated in Scene 2 *We can work it out* (Appendix 1), in the conversation with Gary). Liaison with Human Resources could lead to future organisational impact. To some extent, constructive outcomes from such contact might depend on Lance's skill in persuasive communication, which would, Costley et al (2010) suggest, be influenced by credibility, the disposition of the organisation, and the nature of proposals.

There appeared, from what Justin said to be a minimal application to practice of his research findings. However, he did share them with his team, which possibly had more impact than he perceived or acknowledged, influencing, perhaps, people's perceptions and attitudes without this being discussed (see *Once upon a time, we'd cracked it*, Appendix 1). Justin might perhaps have fitted well with Metz's (2013) argument that work based learning needs to include collaboration in order to build society, that one's identity is subsumed in the collective, and solidarity is gained through caring for each other rather than it only being characterised by the individualistic approach predominant in the United Kingdom/ Anglo cultures. Moving away from focusing on the individual in work based learning (which Hager (2011) suggests was prevalent in the early years of the discipline, but which Wall (2015) argues is still the case) to a perspective informed by a larger grouping might fit well with Justin's approach.

This thesis substantiates the suggestion in the literature that there is likely to be some degree of personal, professional and/ or organisational impact with work based learning. However, such impact might be hard to identify (as, for example, in Callum's case) in the course of one's usual tutoring, and the literature is weighted to impact that can be recognised and understood more generally.

As a tutor I do not necessarily perceive the nature, depth and complexity of impact of their studies on learners. As autonomous work based learners, it is for them to make use of their learning as they see fit, and to interfere with this runs counter to Rancière's

(1987/1991) perception of emancipation. However, perhaps doing more than I currently do, to prompt learners' consideration of the factors involved in impact could support equality in the workplace alongside equality in the tutor/learner relationship. I could consider Critten's work (2016a; 2016b) in relation to my research, and identify questions and actions to raise with students, to prompt contemplation of impact. For example, I could have focused more heavily on strategies for impact in tutorials with Jack, given my negative expectations. While Critten's (2016a; 2016b) overt involvement in effecting difference might not be directly relevant to the type of work based learning focused on in this thesis, I could take from him practical ideas for engaging more with how learning 'manifests and spreads itself out on the ground' (Critten 2016a, p. 32).

Callum's story and my analysis leads me to question Billett's (Hager, 2011) suggestion that learning (in work based learning) depends on both the worker's engagement and the workplace affordances, as this view perhaps does not accommodate the nature of 'engagement' nor the pertinence of workplace affordances. There are circumstances for both which might lead to personal learning being less overt, but none the less present and, possibly, deep and long lasting. It is also possible that organisational learning might be present (and remain so for some time beyond the specified period of learning) but imperceptible in the short term, perhaps due to the limited opportunity for workplace affordances (as I perceive to be the case in the charity where Callum conducted his research). These thoughts surprise me, as Billett's (Hager, 2011) argument helps me understand much in my practice regarding the personal, professional and organisational impact of learning. However, my analysis suggests I should look beyond immediate evidence and seek a deeper awareness and understanding of the impact of work based learning.

Work based learning was a significant experience for the participants, evincing personal impact for all, which incorporated, for example, increased self-confidence, changed self-identity, increased self-direction. Professional impact has occurred through employers' recognition of participants' growth in knowledge and understanding, and partly through participants' self-direction. Organisational impact appeared to be under way in some cases, either through employers' recognition of the participants' relevant insights, or through individuals' innovation.

A social constructionist perspective on the term 'impact' sees that the meaning and significance of the term, generally within higher education and specifically within work

based learning practice and literature, is constructed according to the dominant institutions and their composite knowledge and experience. In the institutional setting in which I practice, assessment is individual in that awards are made to individual learners (rather than a department or organisation); alongside that, in the specific part of the setting (work based learning) in which I work there is an expectation within the discipline, as articulated in the literature and in practice, of personal, professional and/ or organisational impact. The socio-political context would perhaps prioritise the organisational impact and do so in economic terms – greater productivity for the same or less cost. The learners who I perceived to challenge the existing institutionalisation within their context were Lance, Callum and Justin. I found that collective action might be more prevalent than is visible through the institutionalised rituals of assessment – all participants involved in the collective action are not necessarily involved in a programme of study – and it is difficult to recognise impact outside of assessment. Impact can be significant, challenging one's habitus, prompting changes in it, challenging one's assumptions, beliefs and values, and slowly emerging over the long term rather than immediate. Impact can be harder to identify than some of the literature suggests.

All concepts considered in earlier sections can play a part in the extent and nature of impact. For example, Fook's (2010) suggestion to connect individual to collective reflection could facilitate both personal and organisational development. Robinson's (2017) deconstruction of the creative process into constituent parts of imagination, creativity and innovation might help one understand how to move on from individual ideas to organisational practice. Rancière's (1987/1991) concepts of 'citizen' and 'reasonable man' (p. 91) can enrich one's awareness and understanding of hegemonic relations, so one might understand some curtailment of impact, with no or limited overturning of the social order, while recognising one's equality, and effecting it as one feels able. Learners' experiences of such concepts varied, but the concept of Thirdspace appears to encompass elements of everyone's learning journey.

However, all types of impact were limited in certain ways and were diverse in nature. As indicated at certain points throughout, sometimes I gained further understanding of learners' experiences through incorporating consideration of Bourdieu's (1982/ 1987/ 1990) concepts of habitus, field and capital, which are reviewed further in the next section.

Habitus, capital and field

Lance spoke of learning different principles when he left the private sector to enter employment in higher education, comparing, for example, approaches to project management. Jack spoke of his early struggles as he learned the principles of critical reflection. Both learners were adapting their habitus as they developed a feel for an unfamiliar field. Willa spoke of applying the same approach to her Masters as to her undergraduate studies (in terms of discipline, organisation, producing draft work, using feedback) but feeling unsure at times when encountering further or different principles at work at Masters level. Habitus and field seemed to be relevant concepts with which to perceive and gain understanding of change for individuals. However, further reading indicated that change might be complex, gradual and imperceptible.

The 'structured but also structuring structure' (Bourdieu, cited in Asimaki & Koustourakis 2014, p. 125) that comprised Callum's habitus was informed by experiences over the course of his life, including his recent studies. A strong past experience to which Callum referred was his teachers' negative view of his attitude. He believed they perceived he expended little effort or interest, rather than that he found schoolwork difficult. His structuring experiences also included supportive parents. School and family experience appeared to structure Callum as 'inadequate'. His most recent academic experiences perhaps offered changing structuring. However, Wacquant (cited in Navarro, 2006) suggests one's habitus is 'endowed with built-in inertia' (p. 16), due to its multi-layering, which operates as a complex filter through which these later experiences are perceived. The slow pace of change might be traced over a couple of years: Callum's decision to carry on studying beyond his initial aim of a postgraduate certificate; his preparedness to continue his studies without the support of a study mentor; his collection of data through seeking and then interviewing participants. His questioning of the reason for barriers to disabled people's employment and studying could illustrate the difficulty in reconciling social structure and individual agency.

Callum might also indicate the difficulty Maton (2012) refers to regarding what one 'sees' of habitus: 'how can we tell when that habitus has changed, varied or remained the same?' (p. 61). If one is concerned to identify impact of work based learning, this question is significant, but a social constructionist view suggests it is not easy to answer, due to the often imperceptible ways by which meaning is acquired. For example, Berger

and Luckmann (Alvesson & Skõldberg 2018) refer to sedimentation of experiences and knowledge, between individuals, within and across generations, through language's articulation of meaning, and enactment of meaning through rituals and symbols. Relating this to work based learning, it suggests that while within a culture there might be dominant understandings and knowledge, symbolised or demonstrated, for example, through qualification requirements for particular jobs, presence/ absence of tuition fees, organisational or societal views on the value of such learning, each individual brings their own specific sedimentation to their studies.

Maton (2012) facilitates perception of connection between the individual's situation and the social context. In the case of Callum, this perception is of change and impact, and connection to prevalent societal images, assumptions and situating of disability, with consequent funding practices. As I created the play script (*Follow your passion*, Appendix 1) my appreciation of relevant socio-economic factors influencing Callum's situation was strengthened.

Habitus was a concept with which to characterise individual differences in approaches. For example, I perceived Willa and Jack to be moving in Thirdspace differently, with Jack more vigorously seeking out opportunities to develop ideas from his accumulating and imminent experiences. Considering Willa's habitus enabled me to see that she too was doing this, but differently, or with different articulation. Willa's account of her approach to her studies, her consideration of current experiences with the Aurora programme, and her thoughts on career development, portrayed a habitus which contained an organised approach, commensurate with her considerable professional experience in administration. Her familiar fields appeared to be those where organisation and planning feature strongly, and the capital she had acquired fitted with this. As evinced in *Inspiration blossoms* (Appendix 1), Willa's habitus also included considerable determination, demonstrated in her constructive framing of her role model, Helen Keller, whose spirit she valued, and of her own experiences of disability.

Jack's habitus appeared to incorporate critical reflection rather differently than the mechanistic approach decried by Kilminster et al (2010), perceiving it instead as something to operate at group as well as individual level (Boud, 2010), and yet in which personal experience remained significant in effecting change (Fook, 2010). A different habitus might have led Jack to remain in his current post, moderately pleased with the impact of his research on practice, but disappointed organisational development was

not greater; regretting the end of his studies, and being ill-prepared for moving on. Instead, he was already moving on, envisaging future Thirdspace. Jack's habitus appeared to enable him to make constructive use of apparent barriers, challenges or constraints. His 'sense of placement' (Bourdieu 1997/2000, p. 184) appeared to equip him with a 'practical knowledge' (p. 184), which shaped his ongoing experiences.

I sense that Lance's habitus has always sought consensus, and so his approach when seeing the imminence of conflict in his team was to share some of his study journey with one member of staff in particular, but also to be seeking consensus throughout the team, and collective critical reflection. Justin's habitus, like Lance's, had developed over several employment settings (for Justin, all within the public sector) and opportunities for development through practitioner courses and training. Unlike Lance, Justin had not been confronted with strongly contrasting fields. I perceived that at the time of my research, he was perhaps developing his habitus to incorporate management elements, for which he might have had little capital.

Callum's field for much of his life seemed to have included difficulty. Similarly, the field in which he carried out his research, and his employment situation, appeared to present difficulty. I perceive Callum's capital to be composed of much that is negative arising from these fields, despite there also being much that is constructive and positive (such as his academic performance in higher education, generally considered to be valuable capital within a culture in which external measurement of one's aptitudes is sought and valued). As his capital shifted, he appeared to be questioning the rules and assumptions of familiar fields. In contrast, I perceived a quicker change in field and accumulation of capital for Jack, arising from an adventurous, critically reflective and more self-confident habitus, which appeared to include an aptitude for exploration of different fields, different positions within these fields, and of consideration of different principles, assumptions and values.

Lance's professional capital included different fields offered in the private sector, meaning that perhaps he had been confronted with contrast, needing to draw on and develop his capital further to fit the different field of university work (see *We can work it out*, Appendix 1). It is possible that his work with his team was creating a new field, informed by his diverse fields and capital, along with those of the team members. In our discussions, Lance did spend some time considering the changes he needed to make in his approaches at work as he became more familiar with higher education, and

perceived limitations to this field, both generally (in terms of project management, for example) and specifically as he sought support for his team's development. This experience could be considered, in social constructionist terms, as a need for a 'coherent life', and integration between institutions (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018, p. 33). Thomas demonstrated how one's fields might be diverse, offering different capital, and influencing one's habitus in complex ways which are not always visible in a teaching and learning relationship, or always evident, or considered, in the work based learning literature. Thus, Thomas adjusted his duties as a pastor in order to manage his studies. He also referred to his brothers' perceptions of his studies, and their consequent interactions.

The significance of such factors - for tutor's practice, for evaluating engagement in work based learning - is not consistent or obvious. A greater awareness of a learner's fields, capital and habitus might enhance the tutor's approach to teaching and learning, and her awareness of how impact might be more complex and deeper than is apparent, in ways difficult to measure.

Conclusion

The concepts taken as research themes and constituents of work based learning experience connected differently for each participant's experience of work based learning, and the nature and extent of impact varied. The further concepts of habitus, field and capital aided understanding these differences. Play script construction facilitated deeper awareness of and sensitivity to individuals' experiences and thinking, in addition to accessible and dynamic representation of particular elements. The next Act draws together this analysis, using the findings to answer the research questions, considering the contribution made by the creation of the play scripts, and the implications of the insights gained for professional practice.

Act 5 Revelations (Findings)

Introduction

When I review the analysis set out in the previous Act, I think that, overall, in my exploratory investigation of learners' work based learning experience, my intention to maintain an open approach in my use of narrative research was met. I did this by asking the participants to tell me about their experiences, rather than interviewing them, then by analysing what they said through using research themes (each of which encompassed a number of concepts) and considering the nature and extent of impact.

Thirdspace allowed me to explore participants' approaches to and perceptions of border crossing, and I found that individuals dealt with uncertainty and opportunity differently, that all gained something constructive from marginalisation, whether it be knowledge, understanding, skill or awareness, (or all of these); that all spoke of thinking differently as a result of their studies. The insights gained from using this concept supported my belief that Thirdspace was an appropriate concept with which to think about the experience of a period of learning.

Considering participants' experience in terms of equality led to awareness of some participants' radical perceptions, entailing a questioning of the wider social order in one case, establishment of a more equal working relationship amongst the team in another, and a troubled dilemma for one who had to select and develop work strategies while wishing to embrace all colleagues' contributions. Using the theme of equality facilitated recognition of some deeper aspects of participants' beliefs and values.

Using creativity as a theme helped widen my appreciation of what the term might encompass, so I recognised creativity which remained at the stage of imagination, when this might not have happened if looking for creativity in assignments (where, I came to realise, the focus is strongly on enacting of creativity and on innovation). An unanticipated revelation was the extent of collaborative creativity, which was part of

several participants' practice. Another insight related to how the age of a team might influence the extent and nature of creativity, so, for example, it might be easier to generate creative ideas in a fairly new team, but more difficult as policies and procedures become established.

I found that critical reflection might also be collaborative, although such practice might begin in uncertain ways, as one participant's experience demonstrated. Another participant's story demonstrated how reflection can continuously help you to plan for the future. Both these points were unanticipated, and were present alongside the more familiar use of reflection on past learning to plan for current or imminent learning, and to 'allow' one to make mistakes and change one's mind.

Impact at personal, professional and organisational level could be discerned, differing in nature and extent across participants, although it was not always possible to make a precise, clear connection between an individual's studies and the developments they discussed. It was also possible to understand some reasons for no impact more objectively than I might have done as a tutor rather than researcher. I indicated how data analysis led to recognition of the complexity of each participant's work based learning experience, and awareness that impact might be powerful yet difficult to recognise, particularly within a time-constrained assessment context.

I found that embodying some of my perceptions and interpretations of participants' experience in the form of play scripts deepened my analysis, leading me to recognise the value of creating liminal space which was open for new ideas and perspectives to occur. In this Act, I review the purpose of the thesis and consider the justification for seeking to find out about impact of work based learning in higher education. I follow this by taking each research question in turn and considering the responses to which my analysis leads. Regarding the first question, about the constituents of work based learning experience, I take each research theme, articulating the findings that arise in relation to each one. The significance of workplace others is also noted. In responding to the second question, I consider the impact of the work based learning experience, as evinced through the research themes, and the evidence for impact at personal, professional, organisational and/ or societal level.

After summarising the findings in relation to each question, I discuss the significance of creation and inclusion of play scripts, and how this element of the thesis demonstrated

to me that creativity, and engaging with the unfamiliar, can generate insights and support deeper and more sensitive awareness and understanding of the data, and leads me to consider how my approach as a tutor might facilitate such experiences for learners. I also highlight the contribution I think this thesis makes to ways to explore and recognise impact in the work based learning context.

Thus, this Act sets out my findings in relation to the research questions and introduces consideration of the implications for practice, which is developed further in Act 6. It notes how my previous perception of impact, in my role as a work based learning lecturer, was constrained by my focus on the learner's individual practice and on evidence that might be presented in assignments.

Purpose of thesis: a review

As the examination of the term 'impact' indicates in Act 2, I perceived that in the context of higher education its predominant meaning had become something specific (publication in high quality journals) which could limit the attention paid to the impact effected through teaching and learning practice. When reviewing the work based learning literature's treatment of impact, I also perceived problems when I considered this alongside my practice. I accepted that expectation for personal, professional and/ or organisational impact was relevant, but was aware that such impact varied in nature and extent. While Critten (2016a; Critten, 2016b) offers pertinent ideas for addressing apparent lack of impact, and I appreciate the influence of the socio-political context, where, for example, a need for learning relevant to the support and development of the United Kingdom's productivity is articulated in the government's Industrial Strategy (GOV.UK, 2017), I also was influenced in my thinking by other ideas. In particular, Dewey's (1938) concept of the connection between experience and learning as a continuous process encouraged me to wish to know more about impact at an individual level. I felt it could be long term and deep, have strong emotional aspects, and perhaps draw on or trigger creativity. However, such impact might not be recognised as readily as organisational impact, due to it being (apparently) more difficult to match directly with socio-political priorities, or to perceive or measure. Mumford and Roodhouse's (2010) inclusion of learners' stories in their study of work based learning exemplifies how expression of independent, autonomous thinking and experience might feature in the literature. Fook's (2010) connection of the individual to organisational practice

indicates how the levels might combine through articulation. Here was support for my wish to take a 'slower', particular approach in my investigation.

I was also conscious of indications in the literature that the impact of work based learning should be expected to be wider and deeper than the personal, professional and organisational levels commonly considered, with Wall (2016), for example, indicating the potential of work based learning to critically challenge existing power structures. Wall (2017) suggests a number of prompts for promoting a critical stance regarding the effecting and recognition of impact, including creativity, curiosity, and open spaces for communication. Reading about international perspectives on work based learning, such as those articulated by Metz (2013) and Akdere and Salem (2013), provided further awareness that impact might be viewed from a number of perspectives, including a moral one, and a highly social one.

The reading helped open my mind to what 'impact' might actually mean in relation to work based learning. I was most motivated to research impact from the perspective of the individual learner, partly because this matched my practice as a tutor on individualised, negotiated programmes, and partly, as indicated above, through interest in Dewey's (1938) idea of experience and learning informing each other continuously. However, I wished to be able to perceive impact at all three levels and also at societal level, whenever it occurred.

Having perceived constraints on the meaning of 'impact' within the context of higher education and also through some of the work based learning literature, I wished to be open in my investigation, tackling it creatively, so that the findings that arose did not just slot easily into existing frameworks, but offered insights I would find useful in my practice. I also wished to represent aspects of my research creatively, with the intention of making it interesting and accessible to the reader. As outlined earlier, a number of methods were considered, leading to the selection of play scripts. This decision impacted on my analysis, leading to insights that might not otherwise have arisen, as I have stated in Acts 3 and 4, and revisit later in this Act.

Having completed the investigation, I think its purpose was justified and aims fulfilled to an extent. I do now understand more about impact of work based learning experience, and this is relevant to my own practice and also more generally. I have developed a thesis which highlights the creative, subtle and emotional aspects of impact, as well as

those that fit more directly with the literature I have explored. Narrative research helped me focus on learners' experiences in an open way, and follow their lead in discussions. Although I sometimes imposed my own expectations on research discussions, a social constructionist stance helped me to perceive this when reviewing the transcripts, and to focus on what was said and why, and consider what might have been said without my direction. The research approach did support a creative exploration of learners' experience, in considerable depth, allowing much understanding in relation to the research questions, and providing insights for my future practice. I will now consider the findings to emerge in relation to the research questions, followed by a summary of the findings.

What are the constituents of work based learning experience for learners on the individually negotiated work based learning Masters programme for distance learners?

As indicated in Act 2, 'work based learning' denotes a range of provision and encompasses diverse assumptions and values. The nature of the provision varies, as does the experience of students in such provision. However, there are certain constituents likely to be common to most types, such as a tripartite relationship of some sort between learner, their employer, and the higher education institution, and consequent features such as assessment, response to the organisation's needs, identification of the learner's aims and disposition, and the application of learning to the workplace, all of which will influence the nature of the experience.

I chose to investigate the constituents of the learner's experience through identifying research themes that could accommodate these features in an open way, and prompt deep, critical analysis.

Thirdspace was appropriate and relevant for contemplation of learners' work based learning experiences. Most elements (thinking differently, trialectically; marginal positioning) were experienced, although the sense of loss as they left their studies seemed weak. Thirdspace marginalisation could be a constructive experience, not necessarily negative. As Bhaba (1994) suggests, the border crossing can be negative or positive (or, I suggest, both). The following factors might have contributed to the positive nature of this aspect for learners:

- Capability of meeting course requirements: although this was challenging for all in different ways, each had the capacity to work out an effective strategy
- An initially positive attitude: although three of the learners were required by their employer to undertake a Masters course, all learners selected this particular course from a number of alternatives
- The negotiated, individualised, flexible nature of the course, allowing learners to devise assignments of individual relevance and interest, and to arrange their studies alongside other commitments
- Completion of the course and achievement of the award by the time of the research: any negative feelings might have lessened by then

Thirdspace facilitated understanding of variation in learners' perceptions and experiences. For example, as indicated in Act 4, it led me to be more aware of how individuals might identify and react to opportunities, and creation of the play scripts enforced this. It was in the creation of Jack's play script (*Future reflections*, Appendix 1) that I became more conscious of how his habitus appeared to help him make 'the best of things'. Although the play script's specific actions and dialogue arose from my imagining the circumstances that led him to say what he said in our discussions, his interview with his new employers did follow a similar pattern to its representation in the play script. In imagining what he and others might have said, the 'light bulb' moment was my realisation that Jack's recognition of an opportunity to not just accept situations but to shape them, using his studies and associated events, such as attending the lifelong learning conference, influenced his experience. There seemed much connection between this aspect of Jack's manner and that of Bourdieu (1982/ 1987/ 1990), who claimed that his habitus facilitated the identification and use of opportunities.

In comparison, Willa's 'border-crossing' appeared rather different, and demonstrated that using Thirdspace facilitated understanding that uncertainty might be caused by different constituents of the work based learning experience, including assessment and the organisation's needs. In the research discussions Willa spoke of a low point being when she was unsure what she could/ should research for her final module. Longer-term uncertainty related to her role now her research was over, and contained both anxiety and excitement as her manager recognised her continuing interest in research. I sensed that Willa disliked uncertainty. However, it was in writing the play script, (*Inspiration blossoms*, Appendix 1) that I came to see that while Willa might feel very strong ties to Firstspace (represented in the play script by her family), she, like Jack,

identified and engaged with opportunities (here, the Aurora programme and 'surveying the scene' with the prospect of career development).

Analysis using Thirdspace indicated how thinking trialectically aided participants' experience of different constituents of the work based learning experience, particularly synthesis of one's studies and one's workplace's needs. This could occur through contemplation of approach and experience prior to study (Firstspace), what this suggested for what could come next (Secondspace), and how one might achieve that (Thirdspace). Participants varied in the balance they gave to the three parts of trialectical thinking. For example, Justin seemed strongly conscious of prior circumstances, was seeking ways to apply his learning from his studies, but was unsure how to do so. Lance seemed to have a more equal balance, thinking of how his studies had moved him to a different way of thinking and how he might use that for organisational development.

There were differences in how marginality was engendered and perceived. For some it was through the assessment methods particularly; for others, studies engendered a change to usual practice. For example, Thomas's limiting of his duties as a pastor for the final part of his studies altered his practice and role outside of the organisation somewhat. In terms of Bhaba's (1994) 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' (p. xviii), where shared goals are worked towards, there were signs that Willa's shifting identity would lead to such goals in her department, as her developed and developing skills could be accommodated and contribute to the organisation's work, whereas for Thomas I expect that, following his studies, his identity as a pastor reverted to what it had been previously. What Callum seemed to be lacking was a means to work towards shared goals using his research, although a creative approach might support development of such goals going forward (see below).

Regarding equality, although I indicated in Act 4 that some moderation of Rancière's (1987/ 1991) position might be appropriate, particularly regarding the manner of its application (as in the case of Justin, who appeared to feel the positions of both 'citizen' and 'reasonable man' (p. 91) strongly), using Rancière's (1987/ 1991) work led to findings considerably deeper than initially expected. This was particularly so in two apparently contrasting cases. I explained in Act 4 that my research (rather than my pedagogical practice) led to recognising the strength with which Callum valued equality for all. Writing the play script (*Follow your passion*, Appendix 1) crystallised, for me, his

strength of feeling. As a tutor I might have noted the apparent lack of organisational impact from his research but not questioned it. As a researcher using a more traditional approach, I might not have given much thought to this apparent absence. It was writing the script, imagining how he might discuss his findings with his manager, knowing what I did about his difficulty in expressing himself particularly when feeling anxiety or stress, which led me to appreciate the depth of his feeling. The play script also enabled me to represent a critical stance towards work based learning: in looking for impact, circumstances and priorities might make one focus on the easy to recognise, immediate effects, and in so doing, one might miss deeper, long term impact. Thus, considering equality helped me see how both the higher education institution and the workplace might play a weak part in a learner's experience in comparison with individually developing perceptions and understandings. Although different in context, Lance's work towards establishing a climate of equality amongst his team (*We can work it out*, Appendix 1) also indicated the organisational challenges that might present. Writing the play scripts for both Callum and Lance indicated to me that Fook's (2010) assertion of the importance of connecting the individual to organisational experience is legitimate but not necessarily easy to accomplish.

The particular insight relating to equality that I gained from this research and from writing play scripts was about how consideration of equality might particularly facilitate the understanding of the human condition which Garnett (2013) suggests is possible when considering how work and learning are connected. In the past, I had felt this seemed a somewhat extreme, or unnecessarily profound perspective on work and learning, but it was evidenced by the words and/ or actions of some learners, who were troubled by the inequality they perceived. It appeared their studies had both led them to be more conscious of such thoughts, and to either stop at articulation, or to attempt to effect what they perceived to be a more equal workplace.

Creativity played a part in shaping learners' experience of work based learning. Participants differed in the extent and nature of their use of creativity in applying their learning from their studies. In the past, I might have given this little thought, assuming such differences were either because individuals vary in the extent of their creativity, or because creativity was not required in their workplace. Robinson (2017) led to awareness that, for organisations to be effective (up-to-date, relevant to the needs of the society in which they operate), creativity is essential at organisational, team, and individual level. Robinson's (2017) three stages of creativity led to recognition of

creativity that is not enacted, but nevertheless present. This perception led to recognising a link with equality, in that superior positions in the social order might offer greater opportunity to enact one's creativity, while other positions might not.. Lance's assertion that he would have been 'flatter' in his approach, and his reference to his growing confidence as a manager as a result of his studies, suggests a connection between the personal, professional and organisational might be perceived through thinking of creativity. For Callum, with a different situation, creativity was nevertheless evidenced. *Follow your passion* (Appendix 1) illustrates how creativity might operate through articulation of ideas, and that measurable organisational impact might not occur (at least in the immediate term) but nevertheless be possible, and in the meantime, creativity can have personal impact.

The research also raised awareness of how creativity might be collaborative, rather than a private, individual skill only. While Lance sought collaboration in a planned way, Thomas's experience indicates how informality might also facilitate creative collaboration. Thomas's discussions with his colleagues over their studies, which involved direct consideration of particular theories and concepts and their relevance and application to their practice, held the means for all of Robinson's (2017) stages of creativity to be worked through. Imagining the conversation in which Thomas sought to convince others of the value of the concept of the cultural web (in *Adjusting logistics*, Appendix 1) was influenced heavily by what he said in our discussion. Creating the play script provided insight that no matter how informal the image he presented of his office relations, constructive discussion about developing practice took place.

Although some literature indicated that critical reflection might be limited in application (for example, when considering work based learning globally (Wall, 2015) or in terms of its relevance to current contexts (Kilminster et al, 2010)) reflection is core to Dewey's (1938) articulation of experience and learning, and to much of the literature about work based learning, and this investigation found that all learners perceived it as a significant element of their work based learning experience. Justin valued reflection immensely, and writing the play script (*Once upon a time we'd cracked it*, Appendix 1) led me to see this as fitting with his open approach to others' ideas – he was continuously learning, putting his ideas to the test, amending, moving on. This seemed to be Dewey's experiential learning in action. Thomas seemed to be articulating that continuous flow in his description of the connection between his practice and his studies. Lance provides an example of overtly using his learning to inform his practice, which in turn

leads to further understanding, and development of impact over time, as each experience influences the next idea. Some learners spoke of how they continued to use critical reflection beyond their studies, either on an individual basis (Jack, for example, using it in his finding and preparing for a new position) or in differing collective activities (Lance and Thomas being contrasting examples).

Writing the play scripts led me to recognise the significance of collaboration in critical reflection, challenging my previous assumptions of critical reflection as a fairly solitary activity. Lance speaking about his sharing with his team extracts from his assignments showing critical reflection, led me to imagine the setting, and how he would need to articulate his views on reflection when doing so. I understood his need to break from solitary application of this practice. Succeeding in such development presents challenges. For example, Sweet (2010) indicates that opening up space to joint reflection can lead to the 'big questions' (p. 190) coming to the fore (rather than people just carrying on in their own way, with questions and problems unstated). A manager who facilitates such a situation needs to be ready for this to happen. My sense is that this is what Lance was aiming for. Sweet's (2010) reference to how a group (of students) combined individually-made reflective notes with group reflective practice seems to have similarities with Lance's consideration of introducing reflective writing with his team. In contrast, when creating Thomas's play script, thinking about how he talked of the atmosphere in his office, and of discussions with his colleagues, I perceived a good humoured, supportive, work-focused environment, in which collaboration was a natural part of discussion. Such a situation exemplifies Chivers's (2010) argument that, in addition to formal training, informal learning makes a key contribution to development of professional competence.

Finding that collaborative reflection was sought or enacted was an unanticipated insight, perhaps because the individual focus predominates in my practice, and learners are working towards individual awards (although assignments are work based, and it is likely that any changes to practice they suggest involve consideration of others in the learner's workplace). Collaborative reflection varied in nature and extent and arose through different means – for example, through the participant's specific intent to involve others (as with Lance and Justin), or more informally as part of the community of practice's expectation of continuous learning, as with Thomas.

Workplace others

Throughout the analysis of participants' experience I was aware that others affected their perception of reality in different ways. For example, it seems that workplace 'others' for Willa were significant in her developing recognition of her changed status and role. For Lance, they included members of his team, who perhaps were integral to his challenging of 'institutionalization' (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2018, p. 32) when he found his organisation lacking in terms of support for staff moving into the public sector, and for using critical reflection as a foundation for team development.

For Jack, workplace others contributed to development of understandings about international students, and also of lifelong learning (through conference attendance), which he subsequently shared with his new employers. Justin appeared to be in continuous discussion with colleagues, reviewing ideas and understandings. There appeared to be a mutual exchange of ideas and suggestions between Thomas and his colleagues, which seemed to strengthen his valuing of his studies, and understanding of how his learning could be used for the benefit of the organisation.

Callum's manager appeared to contribute to his understanding of resource paucity, while volunteers and perhaps clients inspired his recognition of the potential value of volunteers as a resource that could be used more fully. However, perhaps similarly to Jack, Callum also developed his meaning from his own experiences and values, and in fact seemed to defy some interpretations of reality, such as those perceiving disability as an explanation for limited opportunity. His strong feeling about equality appeared to arise independently of others. A social constructionist perspective suggests Callum's stance was perhaps more challenging to the social order than I realised at the time of our discussions.

What is the impact of participants' work based learning experience at personal, professional, organisational and/ or societal level?

Thirdspace might be both negative and positive, and as a constituent of work based learning had the potential for constructive but also negative effect. For some participants, impact was occurring at personal, organisational and professional level. This might be helped by a continuous process of applying learning to work practices (at local and senior level) and articulation with colleagues, together with a willingness to

explore possibilities. Some of the features Critten (2016a) recommends to support impact (such as the learner involving colleagues in their research; management seeing the course as an opportunity to tackle organisational challenges; the negotiated quality of the course supporting relevance of studies to workplace) were in operation. Perhaps the difficulties in effecting impact in the workplace, which, for example Critten (2016a; Critten, 2016b) examines, are lessened if there is an open approach held by the organisation and the learner to try things out.

Equality also could have a positive or negative effect as a constituent of work based learning. It could be a strong value with which a participant might assess the workplace and plan for impact. It could also lead to frustration if a participant held a strong desire for societal equality and opportunities for colleagues that was strongly challenged by the socio-political context and organisational priorities. While Fook (2010) can aid one's awareness of the often hidden (but deep) organisational values and constraints (such as lack of resources), and therefore one's understanding of difficulty in effecting equality, progressing to organisational change does not necessarily follow. However, development might be more likely with such understanding, particularly if it informs one's articulation of recommendations or suggestions (as, perhaps, Callum tried to do). Overall, the research suggests that equality has the potential for significant impact in work based learning.

Creativity also had potential for impact on learner, organisation and higher education institution. Collaborative creativity might be one way to effect impact, and of allowing space for discussion and sharing of ideas, as Lance appeared to be doing, could encourage innovation to which all staff contribute.

Critical reflection has long been considered a constituent of work based learning and had a very strong effect for some learners. Although there is criticism of its continuing dominance in work based learning literature and practice, this research showed it was integral to impact at personal, professional and organisational level. Helyer's (2015b) consideration of reflection indicates how this might be so, if one perceives that effective and purposeful reflection within a programme of work based learning can facilitate personal and professional learning, and can support the integration of ideas and theories into one's practice. Helyer (2015b) suggests it is synthesised with ongoing thinking and innovation, 'in a continuous cycle of improvement' (p. 22). While all participants recognised impact (at different levels) effected through critical reflection,

perhaps Lance demonstrated most strongly reflection's potential for impact at the personal, professional and organisational level. Recognising his growth in confidence and approach as a manager, he understood the relevance of critical reflection to his own development and that of his team, and was seeking ways to integrate it into their practice, possibly through involvement of Human Resources.

Some insights (such as Jack's approach regarding opportunities; Callum's strong valuing of equality; Justin's embedding of critical reflection in working with his team) only arose through carrying out the research and could be missed in the normal course of teaching. Research might sometimes be necessary in order to understand impact, when it is too complex or subtle to identify in an easily categorised way. It was interesting to see how the commonly distinguished categories of personal, professional and organisational development might be synthesised (as for example, in Lance's case, or in Thomas's assertion to his colleagues of the relevance of concepts from his studies, influencing discussions and practice within his team and also at senior management level). Carrying out the research enabled me to perceive how there could be powerful personal impact with little or no professional or organisational impact apparent. This might particularly be the case in certain circumstances, such as those experienced by Callum. However, even here, where the socio-political context appeared to limit the likelihood of Callum's recommendations being implemented, it is possible that his work would have a longer-term effect (in, for example, how volunteers' strengths and interests might be sought and used).

Thus, the literature's reference to personal, professional and organisational impact of work based learning is supported to some extent by this study, although the nature and degree of impact is varied, and can be difficult to perceive or measure, even though it might be deep. There was variation in learners' experiences of work based learning, and the nature and extent of impact. Bourdieu's (1982/ 1987/ 1990) concepts of habitus, field and capital were used to explore differences further. As a whole, the research has facilitated a greater awareness and understanding of the impact of work based learning.

In particular, I think my concern with learners' individual experience, and the approach I took to explore this, allowed the emergence of a contribution to the understanding of impact in the context of work based learning, which could be considered as rather different from that presented in much of the literature. Paying attention to the small,

the particular, the individual, facilitated a perspective that highlights the creative, subtle and emotional aspects of impact.

Summary responses to the research questions

Regarding the first question, each concept chosen as a research theme facilitated understanding of the work based learning experience. Thirdspace notions of crossing borders, uncertainty and marginalisation; enacted and/ or perceived equality; creativity through imagination, applied imagination and innovation (Robinson, 2017), alone or with others; individual and collaborative critical reflection were all constituents of the experience. They were open and flexible concepts that allowed recognition of similarities and differences in experience, leading on to deeper understanding. Maintaining these concepts supported stability within an open approach, and helped keep a strong focus. Other aspects could have been incorporated, such as the role and approach of tutors, or teaching and learning resources. However, the decision to not include them, even when participants referred to them, is justified on two counts: one is that amending the list to include such aspects as themes could have influenced the investigation to take on a different or specific focus (such as pedagogy), and lessened the opportunity for creative exploration. Secondly, the concepts that were chosen did accommodate those aspects to a degree. For example, Thirdspace could incorporate consideration of participants' strategies for working through uncertainty (possibly caused by encountering a different style of teaching) and also for reviewing Thirdspace when in Secondspace (which might lead to suggestions for learning resource developments). Collaboration was a further aspect of the experience that emerged, and could be accommodated through the chosen concepts (notably creativity and critical reflection).

Regarding the second question, the research confirms and strengthens my awareness of the opportunities the programme offers for impact at a range of levels. There was evidence of personal, professional and organisational impact, differing between participants. There was also evidence that societal impact might be wished for, particularly in relation to equality. The realisation that impact might be subtle, but nevertheless deep and long term, confirmed that carrying out research had led me to a deeper, more sensitive understanding of participants' experience, and to an awareness of work based learning's potential for the disruption Wall (2016) alludes to.

Impact of creating and using play scripts

Act 3 outlines the journey that led to the representation of aspects of my interpretation of participants' experience in this way, and includes consideration of others who have used ethnodrama and/or ethnotheatre (such as Saldana, 2008 and Morgan et al, 2013). I described there the process of creation. I will now consider the impact this approach has had on my awareness and understanding of the data.

As indicated earlier, I was influenced in my decision to create play scripts, and in the manner I went about it by Clough (2002). I was also influenced by the literature relating to narrative research, such as that by Squire et al (2013) who suggest that, if taking a psychoanalytic approach to narrative research, the researcher will note the incompleteness of stories, or the stories untold. While not taking such a specific approach myself, I recognised the importance of attending to silences, or incomplete stories. However, as I sought to identify the most prominent points for each participant, listening to the tapes and reading the transcripts repeatedly, I realised I did not always do this, instead, filling gaps with my expectations. Thus, it seemed that play scripts facilitated better use of narrative research, making me more aware of how I was not always as open as I intended, and why this was. In so doing, I was more able to attempt what Clough (2002) advises and 'consider the narratives which shape our own experience' (p. 64), realising that, despite my desire to be critical, I was still influenced into expecting identifiable development and impact.

Page et al's (2014) use of arts-based enquiry helped me understand better how writing play scripts generally deepened my understanding. Page et al (2014) consider three workshops in which participants engaged in social dreaming, visual artefacts and poetic writing to explore the meanings they held of equality and diversity, and suggest that the liminal space which such methodologies created led to engagement with tacit knowledge, and recognition of the transformative potential of organisational practice. Others using arts-based research also speak of its transformative potential. Pässilä et al (2016) indicate the collaborative potential of this approach, with researcher and participants working together in an open space to develop new perspectives on work based learning, fitting with a valuing of equality, and interest in making work based learning engaging.

This is relevant to my solitary writing of play scripts. Page et al (2014) lead me to see that I created liminal space for my own engagement with impact and work based learning through the writing of play scripts. I came to the creative process already holding a critical questioning of 'impact'. However, it was through writing the play scripts that I realised I nevertheless held expectations consistent with the literature regarding outcomes for learners. Thus, when revisiting the transcripts and writing Callum's play script, I recognised how I kept bringing him back to what were actually my expectations regarding impact – future study or employment. When reviewing Justin's transcripts, I wished I had gone with his flow far more, maybe prompting him to say more about the diverse ideas arising from the collective creativity in his workplace. Perhaps my practice to date led me to seek to move out of uncertainty quickly.

Writing the play scripts led me to some insights I doubt I would have otherwise reached, in particular those relating to a challenging of the social order (particularly the case with Callum and Lance and, less vocal, but also present, with Justin). Page et al (2014) referring to an earlier work by Grisoni, suggest that the process of creation and its outcomes leads to understanding, and I have found this to be the case, and it continues to be so: even now, several months after creating the play scripts, as I read over them, understanding and new perspectives still emerge. For example, I have become more aware of Willa's determination, of Justin's strong feeling of equality (which might constrain one's management approach), of Jack's negotiation of equality in his new setting. When I read out extracts at conferences, I am unsure what interpretations arise for the audience, and do not know how readers will interpret them. This relates to some doubt about the value of this element of my work. As some of the participants in Page et al's (2014) workshops felt over the creative activities they engaged with, I have wondered whether it might seem inappropriate or disrespectful for me to use data in the way I have, and whether I should have used a more conventional approach instead, in which data and analysis are presented within the main body only. However, this would not have captured my learning as fully as creating and including play scripts do. Referring to Cousins, Page et al (2014) suggest that the liminal experience reminds one of the affective and cognitive elements of learning: play scripts have allowed me to capture something of the affective – of my learning and of what I perceive of the participants' experience – as well as the cognitive. Combining the play scripts with more conventional analysis was my way to address concerns over their legitimacy, and I sought to address any thoughts about being disrespectful by asking participants if they would like to read them and provide me with feedback.

Regarding different interpretations, again Page et al (2014) make a powerful, pertinent point, in their inclusion of Emily Dickinson's poem in which she writes, 'Tell all the truth but tell it slant' (p. 587). This leads them to speak of coming to the truth circuitously rather than directly, and with a social constructionist perspective this remains a version of the truth, rather than the only truth. This fits with Clough's (2002) reference to Inglis's 'map on which many individuals may find their place' (Inglis cited in Clough, 2002, p. 100) and Banks's (Banks & Banks, 1998) desire to convince the reader, rather than presenting his research findings as the only possible truth. In this thesis I have presented a version of the truth about impact through the play script collection.

The play scripts, along with my more conventional analysis, made me appreciate the potential of work based learning to have impact at all levels considered, that it might be deep, connecting with values of equality and social order, and with ways of collaboration, and long term, perhaps influencing one's habitus as one moves into further fields. The play scripts emphasised to me the real possibility that work based learning does have the potential to disrupt hierarchies, as Wall (2016) suggests. However, it is uncertain how strongly and overtly this might occur. Such disruption requires a will, a means, skill and confidence. One or two of these factors without the others might lead (as in Callum's case) to strong will for disruption but little or no overt change, due to there appearing to be no means to achieve it, and lack of confidence to support and position to facilitate achievement.

I have also begun to consider the impact of creating play scripts on my practice more widely and directly. As I have indicated, the use of fiction, and the creation and inclusion of play scripts in my research, is a considerable development in my approach, leading me to recognise and question my beliefs and assumptions (see my Learning profile). That the experience of embodying aspects of analysis in play scripts would deepen my understanding was unexpected. I find the play scripts easy to read, and they bring to mind strong pictures of the different scenarios, characters and action. I enjoyed writing them, and enjoyed the experience of 'living' my research.

These positive aspects encourage me to explore how I might use the play scripts in my practice. I have already shared them in a couple of workshops. In one (for a module on teamwork) I read out Scene 2 from Callum's script. This formed part of a discussion on factors that might influence application of one's plans for team development. Another

purpose was to illustrate how it was possible to incorporate alternative assessment formats into one's assignment. This did seem to encourage one student to create a more visual assignment than she had previously assumed would be appropriate. At another workshop, I showed the collection as one of several possible assignment formats. This prompted one student to stay behind to ask more questions about 'doing something different'.

My impression is that play scripts can excite and engage, but should not be the only alternative practice I refer to: it is not a format that would appeal to all. For example, others might find a visual format to be more motivating and practicable. Reflecting on participants' responses to reading their play script, in particular, Lance's comments about body language and facial expression, leads me to identify particular courses for which play scripts might engender energy and engagement. For example, the placement learning module on which I teach (in which full time students go out on placement to the workplace for five weeks as part of their degree programme) can present unfamiliar demands and expectations on young students inexperienced in workplace practices. Although we already incorporate a collection of written scenarios in the induction programme (to prompt discussion of significant aspects of the work placement experience) I think creation of play scripts would enrich this element, offering the possibility of alluding to some of the more subtle features of the workplace (such as embedded commands, the importance of informal conversations and so on). It could also encourage students' own creativity (if, for example, opening scenes were presented, and the students had to discuss likely/unlikely 'sequels').

I perceive further ideas will arise with each development of play scripts I explore: I see the format has flexibility meaning it can be adapted to different situations, with different groups of students and staff, and either effected alone or in collaboration with colleagues. Continuing application and development will, I think, support both creativity and critical application of ideas generated. Thinking more widely, I see that my view of fiction and play scripts (or other creative measures) has expanded during development of my thesis: what started as an adventure about which I was excited but uncertain regarding legitimacy and outcome, has become a tool or approach I perceive as valuable for work based learning research and communication. I wish to explore this wider use through writing and further research (as noted in Act 6).

The meaning of insights from this research for personal and professional practice

In reflecting on personal insights arising from creating and including play scripts, I realised that some aspects of my habitus had changed little since my undergraduate days, when (as indicated in my Learning profile) I was cautious and did not fully realise Thirdspace opportunities. This is a relevant observation because it correlates with how uncertain I felt over experimenting with creativity through the play scripts, and indicates how different this action was compared with my usual practice. However, I learned that forcing myself to be creative led to deeper and wider understanding, that there was much to be gained from liminal experience, and that I should therefore learn to live more with uncertainty. Instead of feeling annoyed that my confidence had not grown in respect of uncertainty over many years, I needed to use this personally and professionally, to remember my lack of confidence and not mask it in relationships with others, and equally recognise and respect others' lack of confidence.

Considering Thirdspace in this personal way, and as a constituent of work based learning experience, leads me to think that as a tutor I should open up space to talk about uncertainty, and its positive potential; trialectical thinking, and the framework it might offer for review, planning and strategy; and marginalisation, to help analyse challenges presented by learning, work or assessment, alongside the opportunities study might offer for learners to try the unfamiliar, to contemplate taking risks within this Thirdspace environment, with the possibility of enriching Secondspace imaginings and subsequent experiences. The idea of border crossing might help learners position themselves and their studies within their wider personal, professional and organisational context, helping them order and plan their experience in an open way.

Regarding equality, incorporating the concepts of citizen and reasonable man into one's teaching, provides prompts for thinking about the wider socio-political context, and for possible or desired change. Alongside this, a pragmatic approach appears necessary, constraining an idealistic following of Rancière's (1987/1991) rejection of explication: learning (for qualifications) is influenced by socio-cultural understandings of the nature of assessment, by quality assurance procedures and so on, in which explication plays a significant part. However, in work based learning there is opportunity for this relationship to change both within and beyond a learner's studies.

Considering creativity as a constituent of work based learning experience suggests that as a tutor I should be open to its use in assessment and application of learning in the workplace. Page et al (2014), Pässilä et al (2016), Pässilä et al (2017), Norris (2009/ 2016) and Saldana (2008) provide examples of specific, creative endeavours during workshops or particular courses, and this is worthy of consideration. Additionally, in my current and usual practice, there is the opportunity to incorporate into assignments creative products such as visual images, poems and short stories. While I have for some time encouraged students to consider creation of posters and storyboards, I now have confidence and skill to extend this support to incorporate consideration of other media. In addition, I can encourage learners to explore what might be appropriate, relevant creative products for their workplace more fully than I have in the past, where products to accompany assignments tend to be more conventional (business reports, procedural guides and so on). These conventional articles remain relevant, as in many cases they are highly appropriate vehicles through which learners can apply and develop the learning from their studies, and at the same time meet the needs of their organisation, and/ or support their personal and professional development. However, I could encourage innovative approaches to their creation. For example, assignment guidance could contain prompts for creativity, such as how recommendations in a business report could be arrived at through creative collaboration, or how views of the team might be gathered creatively.

Nottingham and Akinleye's (2013) explanation of professional artefacts is relevant. An incentive they refer to for incorporating production of such an item into assessment in a professional practice arts-based degree is that using text alone limited the extent to which learners could communicate their research in a way valued by the relevant professional culture. This point makes me think that in my encouragement of learners to explore creative formats such as those described above, I might only have focused on the individual's creativity, being mindful of Robinson's (2017) assertion that finding one's element is important for creative engagement in one's organisation's development. My research, and Nottingham and Akinleye (2013), prompt me to think of the organisation's creative engagement also, and how one might tap into and encourage that. For example, if Callum had actually produced a sample newsletter, demonstrating the talents of volunteers and clients, as part of his assignment, this might have prompted a creative perspective at management level. While such approaches taken by one or two learners in the past have met with mixed responses from their organisations, this

approach to both the learner's and their organisation's creativity is something for further exploration in my practice.

While individual critical reflection might be a familiar element of my practice as a tutor, further consultation of sources such as Fook (2010) could help relate this to the wider socio-political and organisational context. Prompting learners to consider communities of practice, as a way to identify how learning and collaboration are viewed and might be supported in their workplace, might provide a link to collaborative critical reflection.

Acknowledging and making use of how others might contribute to one's practice, during a learner's programme of study could be done in several ways by a tutor. For example, one could develop prompts to help analyse organisational context and culture and perhaps relevant socio-political factors. This might facilitate identification of and strategies for developing communities of practice, and networking opportunities. These are practical strategies to raise awareness of others' contribution to one's learning and development, as Smith and Smith (2015) indicate.

I refer to collaboration because my research, and in particular the writing of the scripts, made me aware that this was considerable for some participants, although little of it was seen in the programme's individual assessment, despite its presence. In comparison, my approach in my practice was rather solitary. Feeling that my confidence and practice would strengthen through seeking more collaboration, since carrying out this research I have sought to work with colleagues from within and outside my department on, for example, conference contributions. Regarding learners, despite the individual nature of assessment, teaching and assessment guidance could include consideration of others relevant to the learner and their studies, in particular colleagues and stakeholders.

The extent to which collaboration might be relevant or appropriate in assessment, as it might be in the workplace, is an example of how both synthesis and conflict can occur between organisation, learner, and higher education institution. Considering how this could be incorporated into assignment options might facilitate synthesis rather than conflict between the three parties.

Conclusion

In summary, the overall purpose and aim to creatively explore learners' experiences of work based learning, and consider impact, was achieved. The constituent elements of work based learning experience were recognised as diverse, varying across provision, but the tripartite relationship between learner, organisation and higher education institution was assumed to be common to all, and was certainly present in the research undertaken here. The research themes of Thirdspace, equality, creativity and critical reflection, supported analysis of participants' work based learning experience. I found that there was impact, for all participants, varying in nature, extent and visibility. My research helped me realise that impact can be deep and might prompt disruption to existing power structures as Wall (2016) discusses (something that, prior to my research, I imagined as a remote possibility). My focus on the individual and my narrative research approach allowed recognition of subtle and emotional aspects of impact, and in this my thesis offers an alternative perspective on work based learning impact.

The experience of creating play scripts enriched the analysis. The creative experience has been transformative for me personally and professionally, and in the next Act I explore what the consequent perspectives and understandings mean in a longer term and more generic way for work based learning practice.

In standing back from my research in this Act, to consider the overall purpose, aim and questions, I came to see that I am often quite superficial as I contemplate learners' engagement with work based learning, looking for evidence of change, when in fact this might be slowly occurring, difficult to articulate, or imperceptible. I might have been quite superficial also in consideration of my own development, assuming I 'must' be developing in ways I value (gaining more knowledge and developing research skills, for example). However, in other respects my habitus has not changed much over many years, and I recognise that initial attempts to engage with uncertainty are appropriate for change.

Overall, I perceive the participants had constructive study experiences, and went on to apply their learning in the workplace, although the nature and extent of application differed. I will use what I have learned about the complexity, and varying nature of impact, with other concepts (such as Thirdspace, equality, creativity and critical

reflection) as I develop my practice in relation to learners and with colleagues, and I consider the more general implications for practice in the next Act.

Act 6 Epilogue (Conclusion)

Introduction

In this conclusion, I consider in summary what I have discovered in relation to my research purpose and questions, and in relation to the methods chosen, in particular to the incorporation of creative approaches. I identify the theoretical and methodological contribution of this research, recognise some limitations of the investigation, and consider implications for practice. The implications relate to work based learning pedagogy and to using creative and arts-based approaches in teaching and research. Carrying out this exploration engendered ideas for further research, which I present in this Act.

The participants' work based learning experience, impact and implications for practice

As indicated earlier, the literature accessed relating to Thirdspace indicated how the concept might represent disturbing, negative aspects of border crossing, perhaps prompted by uncertainty as one leaves Firstspace and anticipates with uncertainty Secondspace. Although participants did experience these more negative aspects, they found ways to deal with them. Additionally, my research led me to perceive much that was positive in this period for participants, with some individuals, for example, illustrating how uncertainty might be constructively treated as opportunity for change.

The insights gained from using Thirdspace to help explore the constituents of work based learning experience are relevant to my practice. Looking at how I can use this concept in my future work with students, I see that I can consider more fully how both they and I can live constructively with uncertainty, and explore opportunity. Since engaging in this research, I have briefly and informally shared the concept with individuals, and perceive it to be accessible and constructive, facilitating creative

perceptions of what might be. In my practice I need to keep working on how to encourage contemplation of possibilities (rather than to accept ideas being prematurely thwarted by contextual constraints). In doing this, the ideas about creativity and also critical reflection, in particular Fook's (2010) suggestion to begin with the individual and link to the organisation, as discussed above particularly in relation to Callum, offer practical ways to facilitate creation, identification, and take-up of opportunity.

Using equality as a research theme and seeing it as a constituent of work based learning helped me understand the depth of the values that students bring to their studies. I learned I should continue to recognise this depth of thinking, even when there is no apparent effect. In the absence of effect, or evident impact, I should consider the reasons for this and recognise the frustration this may cause. I anticipate that frustration might sometimes be combined with incomprehension. My practice would be enhanced if I considered how to address this, or support students in addressing it. Two ways in which to do this might be to introduce the concepts of reasonable man and citizen (Rancière, 1987/ 1991), so facilitating recognition of one's integral equality in the face of material inequality, and to consider how articulation of change, and change at local levels, might in small, even imperceptible ways, effect some upturning of the social order. In doing this, one can draw on Fook's (2010) perspective on critical reflection, in which, having gained understanding of the political conditions in one's organisation, one then considers how to use this understanding to make changes in organisational practices.

My research has both widened my appreciation of creativity, and also facilitated my recognition of the challenges that working creatively might pose. Thus Robinson's (2017) three stages of creativity enabled me to recognise creative thinking without apparent (or immediate) organisational impact. Robinson's (2017) consideration of creative organisations offered a possible explanation for differences in effecting decisions arising from creative activity, relating to the period of time an organisation has been in existence. Regarding my practice, I realise that students' creativity might be present, but not visible in assignments or other parts of the learning and teaching process, and this might be because Robinson's (2017) third stage, innovation, is looked for (and might count as evidence in assignments) alone, and that imagination and applied imagination (or creativity) are paid less attention. I also realised that assessment practice might not facilitate consideration of collaborative creativity, although my research indicated it existed, presenting opportunities and challenges. I

perceive the implications for practice to be threefold, in broad terms. I have already begun to encourage students to consider using creative processes more fully in assignments, and have begun to see a widening of the range of formats used. A further development is to encourage students to use their creative thinking in their assignments even when it does not (yet) reach the innovation stage, drawing on Robinson's (2017) three stages to do so. Thirdly, I need to incorporate reference to collaborative creativity into my practice, facilitating students' recognition of this in their studies.

Regarding critical reflection, the insight that I gained was that some learners were using it in their attempts to change not just their own practice but also that of their team. In an established co-operative community of practice collaborative critical reflection, perhaps taking place in informal ways, was possible. Alternatively, a participant might be in the early stages of establishing a community of practice, and hold the intention to effect some collaboration in critical reflection. Individually, there was evidence of how participants' critical reflection influenced further learning and experiences, allowing them to draw on previous experiences and understanding in perceptions and anticipation of future experiences in work. Regarding my practice, my research leads me to think I should not only continue to use critical reflection in my teaching, with an individual and specific focus, but also to support students in thinking about how they might apply the skill more widely. As Costley and Lester (2010) indicate, this is not always welcomed at organisational level, and Tosey et al (2011) state that triple loop learning is not always the top priority for an organisation. Thus, it is important to think of the implications presented by these points. For example, it might be possible to effect transformation in small, initially local, stages. Sometimes one can challenge and change without taking overt, strong actions, as I think Fook's (2010) work suggests.

The discovery that collaboration was a significant factor in application of learning in the workplace is relevant to my understanding of participants' experience and impact, and to my developing practice. During my practice, I have encountered students who recognised that increasing collaboration in their team could improve practice but who struggled in effecting this. Also, the individualised nature of assessment can constrain reference to collaboration in assignments, apart from in those where the subject (such as those about teamworking) embraces the concept overtly. This leads me to recognise that an implication for practitioners is to identify appropriate prompts to support consideration of collaboration in students' practice and in assignments.

Further insights to consider relate to impact. I found that this could be present, profound, long term and collaborative, and also imperceptible to the outsider, and that it could be personal, professional or organisational. Even where it appeared to be minimal (if overt evidence is looked for) it could be deep, and include articulation of ideas regarding societal change. I found it could be informed by continuous learning over a long period of time, occurring in small steps. In my practice, I can support students in seeing impact as something that is possible without being top level, immediate and overt. Such a perspective can be encouraging and inspirational. Finding ways to overcome some of the constraints that assessment poses (such as being time-limited and individualised) might facilitate practical ways for learners to identify feasible routes to engender the impact they identify as needed. Critten's (2016a) work offers routes into such changes in practice, along with suggestions for how organisations might use employees' work based learning experience constructively.

Looking over these insights and implications for practice, and considering them in more generic terms, it seems that each partner in the tripartite relationship can present and encounter constraints; practitioners should be conscious of these constraints, and work with learners to address those relevant to their work based learning experience. I also need to work with students to help them make the most of the opportunities each partner might offer. Such work involves addressing the constraints of teaching, learning and assessment, and supporting learners to deal with their organisation's constraints, and effecting of liaison, collaboration and influence in the workplace. The tripartite relationship is dynamic, and needs engagement, flexibility and negotiation from all three partners, as Major (2016) suggests.

Implications for practice from creative and arts-based approaches

The research methodology facilitated the emergence of unanticipated data, which could be used - analysed and represented – creatively. Although I did not always maintain my intention to leave control of the discussion with the participant, the fact that I had this intention helped me recognise when I did not achieve it, leading me to consider what was said deeply. From this I learned I should be cognisant of the need to balance advice and guidance with facilitation of students' autonomy. To help me in this, maintaining a critically reflective journal, is likely to be informative.

My decision to create play scripts to represent aspects of my interpretation is an innovative feature of this thesis, and provided a significant learning experience. I have found that entering a liminal space for exploration, experimenting with the unfamiliar, and finding the confidence to be creative, has impacted on my self-perception. I am more open to diverse perspectives and less likely to close down approaches of which I have little knowledge. I seek to use this learning to open up creative, exploratory opportunities for learners. The immediate impact on my practice is to take a more open approach with learners in terms of assessment method. In addition to the storyboards and posters which learners have previously chosen to create, items such as an exhibition catalogue and a photobook have been produced by students, and I continue developing my skills in prompting learners' creativity in assignment construction and format.

With the products Nottingham and Akinleye (2013) consider, creativity was not the only aim: the product needed to be appropriate for the learner's purpose and the organisational context. While this might limit possibilities, it also supports creativity. Robinson (2017) suggests that a balance is needed between freedom and evaluation in order for creativity and innovation to work best within organisations. The existence of evaluative constraints might facilitate encouragement of creative experiment, limiting the fear of chaos arising from unbridled creativity, and helping one identify such constraints and view them constructively rather than negatively. Constraints for students and me include assessment criteria and learning outcomes. Using these creatively, finding the balance Robinson (2017) refers to, can lead to learning transferable to the workplace, strengthening the potential to be creative in one's practice.

Robinson's (2017) reference to the powerful effect on one's engagement and creative contribution if one is able to use one's strengths and interests is relevant to my practice. Work based learning offers the opportunity to do this more confidently than often seems possible in usual work practice (where perhaps evaluation in practical terms might override all others). For an assignment one might experiment, play around with ideas, try out actions prompted by one's reading and one's interests, more freely than when one is aware of the scrutiny of one's colleagues. Such exploration might engender innovative work practice. In this work, Thirdspace is relevant, particularly if seeking to be inclusive, so that all learners might creatively approach assignments, not only those already confident in their skills. As I have found in this thesis, engaging with the unfamiliar can be uncomfortable and make one feel uncertain and lacking in confidence.

Thirdspace can help one 'contain' this, indicating its temporary nature, and also encourage creativity through presentation of opportunities.

Regarding implications more directly linked to arts-based approaches, Saldana's (2008) suggestion that ethnodrama's dramatizing of the data can be a valid mode of expression, 'documenting the lived experiences of participants' (p. 203), and Page et al's (2014) reference to the liminal space that is created through such activity, indicate their use within workshops might be valuable, while perhaps resource heavy and specialist in nature. However, as indicated in the previous Act, I have already used the play scripts with students and have found this triggers interest and engagement. Such experience prompts me to plan further application and development, for use with other groups of students and also staff. This will involve writing new pieces – either alone or in collaboration, either as finished works or open-ended, interactive resources.

Regarding the actual enactment of drama (rather than reading play scripts, as I have done) Page et al's (2014) work is relevant. They refer to the use of specialist and experienced staff to lead some of the provision (albeit supported by those less familiar with it), and Pässilä's work (Pässilä et al 2015; Pässilä et al, 2016; Pässilä et al, 2017), that of Adams and Owens (2016) and of Norris (2016) appears to involve considerable preparation of participants, or their commitment over a period of time. I am uncertain how feasible it is in my practice to introduce such approaches as a major feature of my work, given my current limited experience in this area. However, there are two ways in which it could be accommodated. One is to collaborate with others more experienced in this approach, and build my skills and understanding. The other is to work out how to incorporate aspects of the approach in more conventional ways into existing practice. Morgan et al's (2013) experience suggests that more limited use can be an effective teaching and learning strategy. Developing play scripts relevant to my teaching, for use in different ways (as indicated above), including for use as prompts for learners' participation and own creation seems possible. The literature considered above inspires me to also consider 'mini' participation in such activities within workshops. I am interested in the degree to which this helps create liminal spaces for learners and the arising outcomes.

Theoretical and methodological contribution

All concepts considered in this study have been considered before, and this thesis shows how synthesising the concepts chosen can enrich analysis and understanding, leading to several insights into learners' experience of work based learning. The thesis indicates how the tripartite relationship contains constraints as well as opportunities, and facilitation of its continuing effectiveness and dynamism. However, I believe that synthesis of these specific concepts, together with use of narrative research, fiction, and embodiment of analytical elements through the creation of play scripts, has not been used previously. This combination leads to a new perspective on impact in the context of work based learning, which highlights creative, subtle, and emotional aspects, Such a perspective enabled me to consider the complexity of impact, and to argue that it might occur, be profound and long term even when it is difficult to identify and measure.

Methodologically, the thesis portrays how social constructionist ontology can help direct one's focus away from one's own assumptions and values. Use of narrative research indicates that this position is difficult to achieve and maintain. One needs to remain self-questioning, and self-aware. While it might be impossible to relinquish complete control to the participant, one can aim to be transparent over this, as far as one's self-perception allows.

A further methodological contribution arose through the creation and inclusion of play scripts inspired by the data collected and its analysis. Each stage: the creative process, the physical representation of aspects of the analysis in this way, and considering these creations throughout the analysis, contributed to depth of awareness and understanding. During the creative process, the liminality opens up one's mind to fresh perspectives and perceptions, allowing the affective and cognitive to work together in one's learning. The embodiment of a learner's experience (or one's perception of it) in a product clarifies a focus that represents what was, when the work was created, the most prominent message for the researcher. The product's consideration throughout the analysis continues to aid focus and understanding. Rather than the methodological contribution being about play script creation specifically, it is that engaging in a specific creative process as part of the research journey opens up opportunities to enhance understanding in unanticipated ways. I have come to realise that the thesis demonstrates how use of fiction and creative formats can not only (perhaps) encourage the reader's engagement but also facilitate the expression of complex ideas and

interpretations dynamically. It might also contribute to the researcher's self-perception and efficacy, strengthening and widening their perception of future research projects.

Notes of caution

As indicated in Act 3, as a case study this research fitted with a desire for '*exemplary knowledge'* (Thomas, cited in Tight 2017, p. 32, italics in citation and original). I expected the findings would be relevant to a general understanding of work based learning. The thesis should be read with the expectation of finding resonance with one's own experiences and ideas, and of encountering prompts for consideration of unfamiliar perspectives.

Although the sample was small, this aided the insights and understandings gained. For example, I do not expect that my awareness of the depth of feelings and/ or intentions regarding equality and the social order would have emerged in a larger scale study. With a sample that comprised only Masters graduates for whom I was personal academic tutor, I sought and found depth and focus, leading to a deeper understanding. In the future, it would be interesting to investigate the experiences of students at different stages in their studies, and of individuals who had failed or who were in the process of failing, as well as those with whom I had not worked, perhaps from other institutions.

Having two research discussions with each participant addressed, to an extent, the possibility of data being affected by participants' memories, changing interpretations and understandings, subsequent events, and so on. While it did not negate the subjectivity and possible variability of self-reporting, it offered the possibility of clarifying, deepening, or amending ideas and events previously discussed.

I recognise that bias influenced my behaviour in the research discussions. I take forward for future research that it is essential to be self-questioning. Collaboration with colleagues (and/or learners) would lessen the likelihood of researcher bias, and is suggested in Tight's (2017) example of narrative research.

Considering participants' experiences through the use of a number of themes was difficult to manage, but it facilitated depth and led to an appreciation of the complexity of experience and impact. For example, it was through considering equality and impact

together that I perceived the existence and strength of an individual's 'revolutionary' stance. One without the other could have encouraged a more superficial perception. Persisting with several themes can strengthen one's research approach, leading to understandings – of work based learning, learners, oneself – that fewer themes might constrain.

Future research

This investigation has positioned me at the starting point for several more research journeys.

I have learned that small-scale case study research using the narrative approach has the potential to yield rich data. With appropriate and skilled use (in, for example, sample selection and control of discussion content) it can lead to data that might not be presented when using a more directive approach. This is an approach I intend to use again, in my continuing attempt to recognise and limit personal and professional assumptions ahead of investigation, and to be open to discovery. This approach is appropriate for research into the barriers to work based learning with students who are struggling with their studies, or with those who have withdrawn.

Further exploration of participatory arts-based research has potential to suit a number of purposes and with varying degrees of intensity, from within a one-day module workshop (such as effective team work), to a longer term voluntary project, in which participants share an interest in exploring a particular work based theme (such as application of learning in the workplace). The research undertaken for this thesis, in particular the writing of play scripts, has already prompted me to widen discussion of assessment methods with current students. This could be taken further in a research project investigating creative assessment within work based learning.

A further possibility for research about creative formats such as writing play scripts is to use such a format in future projects and ask for feedback on this particular aspect. One could also publish the collection as a separate artefact, and judge its effectiveness through reader response. I feel this is application of creativity is relatively unusual in the context of work based learning. Right now, I am unsure what practitioners' reactions might be, and whether it could become a more commonly used approach. Research into dissemination is exciting as one cannot predict the findings.

A further concept relevant to approach and focus is collaboration. Collaborative research projects have potential to widen and deepen analysis and outcomes, and to challenge personal bias. Research into collaboration in the workplace generally, into collaborative creativity, and into collaborative critical reflection, are all explorations likely to yield understanding of aspects of work based learning provision which could be developed further. This has the potential to be of immediate and transparent significance in the socio-economic context of work based learning in higher education.

Concluding remarks

This small-scale investigation into learners' experiences of work based learning found that using the concepts of Thirdspace, equality, creativity and critical reflection to frame analysis led to a wide and deep understanding. It was enhanced by consideration of habitus, field and capital. It concluded that, as indicated in the literature, there was personal, professional, and organisational impact, and societal impact either imagined only or initiated, but that the extent and nature of impact was complex and not always easy to recognise.

All participants applied their learning to the workplace, and the effect of this application was influenced by several factors, including the socio-political context; the organisational environment; the participant's position within the organisation; the participant's approach to effecting change. In some cases, the participant was in the process of achieving organisational impact through establishing an equal and collaborative way of working within the team; developing the organisation's offer; engendering a questioning, contemplative approach to problem-solving within the team. In one case organisational impact appeared to be unlikely to occur, at least in the short term, partly due to the paucity of resources.

In all cases, there was evidence of personal impact and, for some, this connected to professional impact. For example, more creative approaches to problem-solving might be taken through using ideas from studies; there might be more preparedness to encounter the unfamiliar; a learner might find using critical reflection beyond his studies supported ongoing development. For some, their studies appeared to facilitate recognition and articulation of deeply held values (in particular equality). More generally, there was evidence of participants using confidence and learning strategies

acquired through their studies to tackle new challenges. In exploring the impact of work based learning, it became clear that for some participants collaboration in the workplace was both a significant opportunity to try new practice and also to gain further ideas. In particular, collaborative creativity and critical reflection were evidenced. The research led me to see that assessment in higher education work based learning is constrained by time and by expectation of evidence, unless one builds into practice ways of accommodating the possibility of long term and deep impact. It also suggested that assessment could incorporate consideration of collaboration more fully than I have effected to date.

These insights were facilitated by the research approach taken, with narrative research facilitating participants' control of much of the content of data collected. This led to a deeper understanding of impact in relation to the particular, and to the realisation that it might be deep, touching on an individual's profound views and values, and yet might not lead to any immediate, perceptible evidence. It also led to a realisation that this 'invisible' impact might become visible in the longer term than is usually contained within an assessment period.

The emergence of these insights was facilitated by a significant feature of my approach, which was the creation and inclusion of play scripts, one for each participant, to represent the aspects of their experience that seemed the strongest. This feature strengthened the analysis in two main ways: one was that the many re-visits to the transcripts, identifying the strongest message(s) for each individual, helped strengthen clarity and focus; the other was through the imaginary leap I had to take in creating the scenes that could lead an individual to say what they did. This led to greater empathy and understanding than is usual in my practice. The experience of tackling something unfamiliar, and seeing how revelatory it might be, can transform one's perspective and approach, and prompt insights which lead to further adventure and development. Encouraging current and future students to consider tackling the unfamiliar, and to be creative in their approaches to work and learning, will enrich their work based learning experience and the nature and depth of its impact.

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Appendix 1

Voices from the edge: Crossing borders

A collection of play scripts

VOICES FROM THE EDGE: *Crossing Borders*

A collection of play scripts

VOICES FROM THE EDGE:
Crossing Borders

A collection of play scripts

Follow your passion

Future reflections

Inspiration blossoms

We can work it out

Adjusting logistics

Once upon a time, we'd cracked it

Contents

Follow your passion

CHARACTERS

CALLUM, recent Masters graduate, and research participant
MARY, service manager
SHIRLEY, secretary
PETER, father of Paul, a client

SCENE 1

Foyer of single storey building with large windows looking out onto small car park and beyond that to agricultural land and a busy road.
CALLUM *strides across the foyer to a door on the left, smiling at* **SHIRLEY**, *who is on the phone at Reception, as he goes.*

CALLUM (*to himself*) Oh God. She doesn't know. Her day's just normal.
Takes a deep breath as he goes through the door.

Enters a large room containing a few café style tables and chairs near the kitchen, low book cases filled with books of different shapes and sizes, two easels, large tables, a collection of art equipment and paper.

MARY *is just coming out of her office, a small area partitioned off from the large room*

CALLUM (*Smiling nervously*) Good morning, Mary.

MARY (*Relieved*) Oh, Callum. Thank goodness. Can you go to the kitchen? It's a tip – dirty cups all over the place. Needs sorting out.

CALLUM Er, well, OK. I guess so. Er …

MARY Hop to it, lad – there's no one else here yet. Well, I mean volunteers, otherwise I'd get them to do it, obviously. But you can see Paul's already here with his Dad and I don't want Peter finding things to complain about. (*Begins to carry on walking*)

CALLUM Yeah, sure, but later, can I …?

MARY (*Stops, looking back at* CALLUM) Yes, what is it?

CALLUM We'd agreed that it'd be OK if I spoke to people, found out, for my course.

MARY Oh, of course we did. Yes, that will be fine. The problem will be shutting people up, especially Peter! You'll have to watch what he says if Beryl's there as well – you know how anxious she is about what's going to happen to Lucy if we close.

CALLUM Thanks. I will. OK, I'll go and wash the cups.

MARY *quickly heads to the door, making the thumbs up gesture to* CALLUM *as she goes.*

CALLUM *sets to in the kitchen, gathering dirty cups and plates and filling the sink with hot, soapy water.*

CALLUM (*to himself*) Life could be easier, just washing the cups, mopping the floor. What the hell am I doing? What am I going to say to Peter? How will I get this bloody research done? Everything is just too much!

The door opens and PETER *comes in with a plastic beaker.*

PETER All right, Callum? (*Raises eyebrows, smiling*) Found this stuck behind the football books. Don't know how long it's been there. Er, Paul's hoping that lad will be in later – that one who's in the Sunday league.

CALLUM (*Taking the cup*). Thanks. Who? James?

PETER That's the one. At least if you get cracking on this lot, she won't have him in here wasting his time – what's the point of volunteering if this is all you're doing?

CALLUM I know. (*Stops, looking at Peter*) Peter, er, can I ask you something?

PETER (*Smiling*) You can ask.

CALLUM Well, I'm on a course and …

PETER Good for you. God, I'm still wondering what course Paul could do when he's older – will he still come here, do the same things? (*Bites his lip anxiously*)

CALLUM Well, that's what my course is about, really. I've got to do research.

PETER (*Pursing lips*) That sounds hard, not sure I can help you on that, lad – thanks for asking, though.

CALLUM (*Takes deep breath*) What it was, no it's not writing, it's er, …

PETER Well, spit it out, lad (*Slight, quick turn of his head to look back through the door to where he has left his son*).

CALLUM Er, can I ask you questions, about what you think of this place, what Paul does, if you think it's er, OK and that?

PETER (*Looking surprised*) Well, why do you want to do that? Who are you doing this for? (*Frowning*) Is it to close the place down?

CALLUM (*Raises eyebrows*) No, no, definitely not! I'm doing it for me. I mean, I'm on a course and I've got to show I can find out about things in a workplace, and write about it and my tutor will give me a mark. It might even help, if Mary reads it when I've finished.

PETER She better bloody had, lad. (Pardon my French). Come on then, let's get started – or have you got to finish that washing up first?

CALLUM (*Looking at the washing up bowl*): Well, Mary …

PETER (*Raises his hand*) Say no more! I'd better get back to Paul – gets restless if no volunteers are in. Right – give me the nod and we'll have a good old chat.

PETER *heads out of the door.* CALLUM *takes a long, deep breath.*

CALLUM (*To himself*) Oh my God, I'm actually going to do it. I'm lunging - I'm taking the bullet!

Scene closes.

SCENE 2

MARY's *office (a few months after Scene 1)*

MARY *is seated,* CALLUM *enters*

MARY Oh, hi, Callum. How are you today?

CALLUM Very well, thanks. I passed my course.

MARY Congratulations. Glad we could help.

CALLUM I wondered if … er…

MARY Yes?

CALLUM (*To himself*) Just lunge

CALLUM (*Looking at* MARY) Yes, my report, about volunteers here, and how that could change. What did you think of it?

MARY Oh, yes, you gave me your report, didn't you? Yes, ah, here it is.
Mary unearths it from underneath other papers on her desk and holds it up

CALLUM (*Smiling*) Yes, that's it. Y'know, once I got going, I had loads of ideas about the volunteers – using their talents, like James and his football knowledge, and Sally who could write a fantastic newsletter, devise competitions, and so on. What did you think?

MARY (*laughs*) Yes, such talent! And you could draw the cover!

CALLUM (*smiling*) Cool. True. But, did you know that Paul's great at cartoons? We could get the clients involved as well. Who says they can't do things just 'cos they're disabled? If they get the things they need, it'll be amazing what they can do. (*Stops, looking at* MARY *expectantly*)

MARY (*Looking down at the front of the report, then leafing through it*) Very true, Callum. (*Sighs*) Thank you very much, Callum. Yes, you gave it to me the same day we heard the arts centre is closing.

CALLUM Oh yes. That was bad. Er, so my report … the recommendations. Opportunities … er

MARY Definitely. Very interesting, Callum. Your ideas would be very satisfying for

those groups of people. (*Smiles at Callum*)

CALLUM Thank you. Is it useful? Here?

MARY Useful? (*Raises eyebrows, pauses*) Well, a good question. Thing is, Callum, these things take time – if there was more money, then certainly!

Scene closes

Future reflections

CHARACTERS

JACK, recent Masters graduate, and research participant
MARK, head teacher at the international school Jack will be working in
STEVE, deputy head teacher with responsibility for resources at the same school
RACHEL, secretary

Reception area in a suite of rooms within a Georgian, stuccoed white building near to Euston Station, London
JACK *is guided from Reception by* RACHEL *towards a door that opens to reveal a middle aged man in shirtsleeves, smiling.*

MARK Jack? Pleased to meet you. Come right in – I'm Mark, and this is Steve, who you've Skyped with, I believe. Thanks, Rachel, see you later.

The secretary returns to her desk and JACK *and* MARK *go into the room and close the door. Introductions take place, followed by social pleasantries, leading on to discussion about JACK's imminent employment at their international school. It then moves on to his studies.*

STEVE Jack, can you tell us about the course you're on at the moment, at Leeds?

JACK Oh, that one. Yes, the library course. Sorry, I thought you meant the course I've just completed.

STEVE Ah, yes, a Masters as well, wasn't it? But more general?

JACK Well, yes, it was not a library course per se, but it was work based learning, so everything I did on it – all the reading, the assignments I had to do, my research, it all had to directly link to my work in the library. I have to say, there's only been a few times in my life when I've thought, 'Everyone needs to know about this. It's brilliant,' and this course is one of them. Definitely. (*Laughs*). It's still having quite an effect on me – carries on surprising me. Making me think differently about learning, especially lifelong learning.

STEVE Wow! Powerful words, Jack. (*Looks at Mark, slightly questioning expression*) I was planning on asking you about cataloguing online but we can do that another time – more of tick box thing really, and you'll have covered it in Leeds, I'm sure. (*Mark raises eyebrows and shrugs*)

JACK Yes, we have.

STEVE But what's this about lifelong learning? And this difference?

JACK It came from learning about reflection, really. I know the term can be batted around a bit too much, but to see how your practice fits into the wider picture, where it's part of an organisation, I think that's really important. It's what facilitates change –

whether in people's opinions, or approaches, or culture – a lot more than just being given information.

STEVE Hmm. Can you use this with young people – the pupils?

JACK I would think so. If you wanted me to have a go at that, I think I'd need to plan it by using how I work now with new things and reflect forwards – go through a stage of reflection first, to inform my future actions. Reflection definitely informs the future.

STEVE (*Looking at* MARK) Mark?

MARK Yeah, possibly something to work with – your main job is as librarian, remember.

JACK (*Nods*) For sure. But I think the course – well, my managers are using some of the ideas that came out of my research now – and that was about libraries – and international students, but other things I've done associated with it – like presenting at a conference about lifelong learning – help me think outside the box, explore other aspects.

STEVE Good words, Jack. I think your approach will be quite different from your predecessor's. Mark?

MARK Indeed. Tell you what, Jack, how about if you come up with your plan to help the students use reflection, send it to us, and also think about how you can incorporate it into your main duties?

JACK (*Smiling*) I'm on it! In fact, (*turning to* STEVE) that conference I'm just back from? (*Looks questioningly at* STEVE*, who nods*). Well, it gave me even more ideas, and yes, I could adapt them for the children – long-term approaches. Could fit the school's philosophy of lifelong learning.

MARK (*Looking at his watch*) Steve, that Skype call's due in ten minutes – need to –

STEVE (*Sitting up straight, nodding*) Sure, Mark. Sorry about this, Jack.

JACK No worries. My fault – shouting from the rooftops!

STEVE And you've got much to shout about – would love to carry on, but we're cramming as much as we can in while we're over here.

JACK (*Nods*) Of course.

MARK *starts to gather papers together.* JACK *stands up, packing his bag.*

MARK (*Looks up*) Yes, I'm sorry, Jack. I'm realising we can start planning far more with you than we expected.

JACK Certainly.

MARK OK. As well as jotting down some ideas about reflection, how about getting an actual session plan together? Or two or three – lifelong learning approaches, concepts?

JACK (*Raises his eyebrows, smiling*) Wow. OK – what ages?

MARK Ah, exactly – lifelong learning! Not just the students – what about their parents? In fact, what about the staff?

STEVE *raises his eyes in surprise, smiling.*

JACK Really?

MARK I don't know – but over to you. Send us your ideas, say in (*checks calendar on phone*) a month's time? We'll read, Skype and think!

JACK Certainly!

They complete good-byes, shaking hands. MARK *takes* JACK *to* RACHEL.

Scene closes.

Inspiration blossoms

CHARACTERS

WILLA, recent Masters graduate, and research participant
MARGARET, Willa's mother
FRED, Willa's father
BELLA, Willa's aunt
GROUP FACILITATOR
GROUP PARTICIPANT

SCENE 1

The lounge in Willa's parents' home
WILLA *is visiting her parents, with whom her aunty,* BELLA, *is staying. All are sitting in the lounge, drinking tea*

WILLA How's your visit going, Aunty Bella. Have you been to Abakhan [*local shop selling craft and textile products*] yet?

BELLA Not yet. I've had an email from them. Their sale starts tomorrow!

WILLA Yes, I know! Shall I call for you after work? They're usually open 'til late on sale nights.

BELLA Will you have time? Your Mum always tells me how hard you're working with your studies! All the invites you've turned down!

MARGARET Bella, she's finished that now – I told you!

BELLA Yes, I know. (*Turning to* WILLA) I sent you a card, didn't I?

WILLA You did, it was lovely. Thank you very much. Anyway, yes, I've finished my studies, so I'm free to go shopping tomorrow night. Actually, I need to get some card making materials – haven't done that for a while.

BELLA (*Smiling*) I'll look forward to it. So, you've actually finished. Well done.

MARGARET (*Looking up from her magazine and leaning towards the others*) That reminds me, Sheila says 'Congratulations.'

WILLA (*Frowning*) Who's Sheila?

MARGARET The hairdresser I go to – in the village.

WILLA (*Raising her eyebrows*) How does she know?

FRED (*Raises his head from the paper*) Everybody knows, love, everybody we meet.

WILLA (*Frowning*) How come?

MARGARET (*Smiling*) We're telling them!

BELLA (*Loudly, with enthusiasm*) Celia and I were so excited when your Mum invited us!

WILLA But Mum –

MARGARET (*To* BELLA) Oh, and Dorothy can come. We'll all be cheering you on, Willa.

WILLA (*Quietly*) Mum, that would be lovely, but I don't know how many tickets I can get. I already need one more than the two they give you, so you and Dad and Kevin can all come.

MARGARET Willa, we all know how hard you've worked, how tired you must have been, all those family things you missed. We're all very proud of you and we **all** want to be there - see you in your gown, shaking hands, getting your degree.

BELLA (*Smiling, in awe*) So grand, in the cathedral too! The experience of a lifetime.

WILLA Well, you're all very sweet. I'll see what I can do about tickets.

FRED (*Looks up again, smiling sympathetically*) Atta girl!

SCENE 2

A meeting room in a university: a meeting for the Aurora project (a leadership development programme for women in higher education)

Approximately 50 women are seated around tables, maybe 5 or 6 people in each group. A presenter has just finished speaking and group discussions have begun. WILLA's *group is talking of their role models. It is now* WILLA's *turn.*

WILLA (*Looks around at everyone*) Well, I chose Helen Keller.

GROUP MEMBER Oh, I think I saw a film about her when I was younger. Was she the woman who was deaf and blind?

WILLA (*Nods*) She was the first deaf and blind woman to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree.

GROUP MEMBER So, succeeding despite adversity? Being independent?

WILLA (*Nods*) Yes, exactly. I don't know if you've noticed I'm partially deaf – clearly not the extreme difficulties Helen Keller had – but I could understand her frustrations when she couldn't communicate. With Ann Sullivan, her tutor, she learned to communicate and break through her isolation, allowing her to blossom. And that's how I feel about my Masters – that course allowed me to blossom.

GROUP FACILITATOR Thank you very much, Willa. You are inspirational in what you say about your inspiration! So, now we've all shared our role models, how do we use our inspiration in our careers? Moving into leadership? Willa – would you like to keep the flow going and lead us off?

WILLA (*Raising her eyebrows*) Oh, ok, if you like. Well, Helen Keller. Hmm. OK. I feel energised about my career now I've got my MA. I kept going with that, even though it was hard, planned my strategy – even had a break for a big birthday! (*Laughs*) So that gave my confidence a boost, and Aurora's doing that, too. And confidence in other people, and I'm learning how to communicate that confidence.

GROUP FACILITATOR Very thoughtful ideas, Willa. Is this leading you to career development ideas yet? Or leadership roles?

WILLA (*Smiling*) Well, I'm actually happy in my job at the moment, but I can survey the scene. Another thought I have is how I can encourage people to do what I did, or similar, and take up studying, because although it's been hard, and had frustrations, I'm over the moon that I've done it, and that's a good feeling for everyone to have about their achievements.

GROUP MEMBER Will that be hard, do you think? Encouraging people?

WILLA (*Purses lips*) Well, I might be lucky. One thing I've noted is how, when you start this programme, it's like becoming a member of a whole new community of like-minded people. It's like a special club – I belong to a club in the University that promotes learning, so I think that's quite nice, actually. So, who knows?

GROUP FACILITATOR *responds and invites another participant to speak.*

Scene closes

We can work it out

CHARACTERS

LANCE, recent Masters graduate and research participant
PAULA, a recent recruit to his newly formed customer services team
MARK, another recent recruit to the customer services team
GARY, a fellow manager in learning resources

SCENE 1

LANCE's *office*
LANCE *is sitting at his desk and* PAULA *is sitting facing him*

PAULA (*Stretching her hands out*) But I really don't see what the problem is – I don't mind if people talk about their weekend, but I don't need to join in, do I? If I'm getting on with the job, answering the phone, following things up – isn't that what I'm supposed to do?

LANCE (*A pause.* LANCE *looks at* PAULA*, raising his eyebrows to express mild surprise*). Absolutely, Paula. And it's great that you're keen to get on with it. I guess it's just that, with being a new team, people coming together who don't know each other, it can be a good idea to just have a chat now and then – not all day – just to get used to working together.

PAULA (*Turning down her mouth*) Yeah, but when the phone rings -

LANCE (*Nods*) Well, yes, it's important the team shows good customer service (*laughs*). Wouldn't be much good if people didn't get through when they rang the customer services team!

PAULA That's what I mean. (*Folds her arms, looks down, thinking*) But yeah, I guess I do need to get involved a bit more – maybe I'm too used to working for myself - I needed to answer the phone quickly to help keep the work coming in. (*Looks at* LANCE). And having no one else I had to check things out with, or talk to – I guess when you work on your own you separate work from everything else – social life, interests, and things. (*These words said quietly as if dispirited*)

LANCE (*Lively voice, leaning towards* PAULA) That's really interesting, Paula. You stood out when we interviewed people as someone able to take responsibility, (*pause*) but what you've just said makes me see it probably is a bit different for you – sharing an office with other people – everyone's different, used to doing things in certain ways. (*Nodding*)

PAULA Yeah. (*Smiles*) I thought I'd like working with other people, but I'm not sure …

LANCE (*Puts head to one side, raising eyebrows, looking at* PAULA) Well, these things take time, y'know. The thing is, what you've just been saying, that reminds me of my studies – you know those I've just finished?

PAULA (*Frowns*) Your studies?

LANCE Yeah. You've just been doing a bit of reflection. That was something I had to do – reflect on what I did in work, why, whether there were different approaches. Just try to understand things more deeply. The reading - that gives you different perspectives. (*Studies* PAULA)

PAULA (*Still frowning*) So that was your course?

LANCE (*Laughs*) It certainly was! It was for my Masters! And yes, reflective practice. Sounds hateful – reflective practice – picking out moments of weakness or moments of strength, but we nearly all do it, some of it. Think back, move on and use what we've learned.

PAULA Move on. Is that what I need to do? (*Looks uncertain*)

LANCE Not from this job, but yes, in any new job I guess we've got to move on from former practice, and reflection can help. (*Turns to computer, searching the monitor as he presses some keys. Turns back to* PAULA) Look, I could send you little extracts of the last piece of work I did, show you what I mean.

PAULA OK. (*Slowly nodding*) Not sure I'll understand it. But, you'd share your work with me? (*Sounding surprised*)

LANCE (*Looking at his computer, pressing some keys, moving and clicking the mouse*) Sure. There you go, I've emailed the essay to you. Have a look. No, you will understand it – just see what you think.

PAULA OK. Er, thanks. (*Unsure*)

LANCE Well, have a look, and let me know.

PAULA (*Looking serious*) Thanks very much, Lance. I will.

Scene closes

SCENE 2

LANCE'S *office*
MARK *and* LANCE *are seated at* LANCE's *desk.* LANCE *is sitting back, looking at* MARK*, smiling.*

LANCE So, what's up, Mark? How's it going, now you've been made full time? Liking it?

MARK It's great – I didn't expect it to happen so quickly, even though you'd said it was something you intended.

LANCE That's right – well, people are coming to value the team, thanks to everyone's hard work. Happy? (*Raises his eyebrows, questioning*)

MARK (*Nodding*) Sure. (*Frowns*) I guess some people are still worried, though. That might be the reason for a bit of, I don't know, a bit of awkwardness. Yes, I've been made full time, and so has Emily, but the rest are still on probation.

LANCE That's right – they began a few weeks after you two. (*Points to the year planner pinned to the wall*)

MARK I know, but they might be thinking that making us full time reduces their chances.

LANCE I'm hoping to keep everyone on. Where did they get that idea?

MARK (*Shakes his head*) Hmm, maybe bad experiences in the past. One worry – I think – you know if someone's always keen to answer the phone - is that going to lead to them being kept on because it's on their record?

LANCE (*Raises his hand, gesturing for* MARK *to stop*) Hang on a minute, you're talking about a situation completely made up – that's not happening. Hmm, but yes, that could explain things a bit. I never thought such ideas – oh, here's Gary, for a meeting we've got. Mark, er

MARK *rises,* LANCE *gestures to* GARY*, who enters*

LANCE No, don't rush off, Mark. Gary, Mark and I were just talking about the Customer Services team.

GARY Right. (*Turns to* MARK) Gosh, Mark, you must be very busy in there – how did we cope without you! (*Raises his thumb, smiling*)

MARK Er

LANCE That's what I was just telling Mark – people are a bit worried about their jobs, whether we'll keep the team going. I'm picking up there might have been a few fractious moments due to stress over nothing.

GARY Really? So, you're going to knock heads together?

LANCE (*Frowns*) Seriously? (*Turns to* MARK) Mark, don't listen to him. That's not my approach – or this organisation's. Thanks, Mark. You've given me something to think about (*pauses, looking at* MARK) – past experiences. Turning situations round. Hmm. I'll come back to the team in the next couple of days. Can we leave it there for now?

MARK (*Unsure, but wishing to sound positive*) Sound. Thanks.

LANCE See you later.

MARK *leaves.*

GARY What was all that about?

LANCE Oh, new team nerves, I guess. People not getting on that well, although they're all doing a good job. I'll maybe speak to HR, see if they've got anything about sharing critical reflection, maybe writing it down, sharing anonymously.

GARY Like I said, there's always knocking heads together

LANCE But if they're fearful, and misinterpreting behaviour… I want the best for them.

GARY OK. Well, it'll be interesting to see what you find out from HR.

GARY *raises the topic of their meeting and they begin their discussion.*

Scene closes

Adjusting logistics

CHARACTERS

THOMAS, recent Masters graduate and research participant
HENRY, Thomas's colleague, sharing the same office
WILLIAM, Thomas's colleague, sharing the same office
DEBBIE, Thomas's tutor

SCENE 1

THOMAS's *office, shared with* HENRY *and* WILLIAM. *All are seated at their desks*

HENRY (*Looks up from his computer and across to* THOMAS) Thomas, you seem to be very busy. I thought you'd finished the review of logistics contracts. What are you doing?

THOMAS Yes, I have finished the review. I sent the report to head office just before lunch. (*Looks at monitor, types, looks back at* HENRY) At the moment, I'm doing my MBA.

WILLIAM Oh. (*Stops typing, turns to* THOMAS) What are you actually learning?

THOMAS Right now, I'm learning about the cultural web (*Smiles*)

HENRY Oh, my tutor's mentioned that. (*Waves his hand dismissively*) What do you think of it?

THOMAS I think it's good. It gives me a better understanding of this place.

HENRY What do you mean?

THOMAS (*Spreads his hands*) The organisation. Most of the time we look at it from our own point of view, what we (*pointing to himself, and to* HENRY *and* WILLIAM) think should happen -

WILLIAM Yes?

THOMAS - from the worker's point of view. But now I can think of taking it from the management point of view, (*pointing out of the office*) what they want to achieve, their vision of the organisation.

HENRY So, where does the cultural web come in?

THOMAS Just there! We come with our own culture, values, belief system, but have to adjust to the culture of the organisation, to be able to achieve what the organisation wants. You must understand what that culture is. So, here's an opportunity to go back and read much more on issues, on corporate culture, from the point of view of the organisation.

HENRY (*Purses his lips, thinking*) Is it worth it?

WILLIAM Well, it will be if he gets his Masters! (*Laughs*)

THOMAS Yes, it is worth it. It gives you a different perspective. Look, at the moment I'm writing about length of contracts, and terms and conditions, and I'm reading about other approaches, and they could work here, making transport and delivery more reliable.

HENRY OK. I get that (*thoughtfully*). Sounds relevant.

WILLIAM Ah! Is that why they've started asking you to meetings?

HENRY Yes. What's that all about?

THOMAS (*Shrugs*) Well, researching logistics … it's something they have to know about. (*Looks at the others*). I'm sure you'll also be giving us new ideas when you start your research!

Scene closes

SCENE 2

DEBBIE's *study at home*
DEBBIE *and* THOMAS *are in conversation via Skype. The connection is now clear, after ten minutes where it was intermittent, so* THOMAS *has started talking about his study experiences.*

THOMAS What was good about it was that I'm in full-time employment, and I can be doing my learning in my own leisure time. I would not have to leave my job or my place of work.

DEBBIE Good point. How did that help?

THOMAS Well, the comfort of your room, and the pace at which you can learn are helpful. Sometimes it becomes very difficult. So, you can learn at any time that suits you. You are not confined to attend lectures. You might be engaged in the morning, so you decide, 'Well then let me learn, or do my studies, in the evening.' And of course you also have the choice of materials to use. Sometimes textbooks do not bring out the clear meaning of what you are learning, but you decide what textbook to use.

DEBBIE Yes

THOMAS I think that flexibility makes it easier for you to learn. Also, you are able to have time to reflect over whatever you are learning.

DEBBIE Yes

THOMAS You are able to pick up one or two things from your place of work, your professional practice, and integrate it into your learning, which makes it much better for you to understand. That's something that makes work based learning easier than just using textbooks.

DEBBIE OK?

THOMAS You can cast your mind back and reflect on various aspects of your professional practice and bring this into your learning activities.

DEBBIE Yes, and that worked. Congratulations again on your success!

THOMAS Thank you. But I've been thinking, sometimes YouTube is a good idea.

DEBBIE Yes?

THOMAS Yes. So, for example, a lecturer is filmed explaining a concept. If it is on YouTube I can access that whenever I wish.

DEBBIE That seems a good idea.

THOMAS And more than that. Students could share examples of good practice. We've started doing that in the office – amazing what ideas you get - thinking about what we do and why.

DEBBIE Very interesting

THOMAS So, for students an online discussion forum would be a good platform for critical reflection and sharing ideas with other people.

DEBBIE Oh, I will need to mull that over, it could be exciting.

THOMAS I truly think it would be.

DEBBIE So, you have succeeded. You have your MBA. How do you feel?

THOMAS I feel very great, very great, and not only that, but I can really see my level of understanding, knowledge and impact has also improved. Really, it gives me the confidence so I'm able to pick up a number of issues, interrogate them, and make a critical analysis.

DEBBIE That sounds good.

THOMAS And the business is also benefitting. I'm invited to many discussions. Most of my contributions are worked on or accepted.

DEBBIE Oh. Excellent.

THOMAS So, I think that's a great improvement. I'm really happy for this development.

Scene closes

Once upon a time, we'd cracked it

CHARACTERS

JUSTIN, graduated with Masters eighteen months ago; research participant
SEB, Justin's current line manager
RACHEL, Justin's colleague
DEBBIE, Justin's tutor

SCENE 1

The reception area and information point, JUSTIN's *department*
JUSTIN *and* SEB *are behind the main desk, chatting.* RACHEL *is seated at the computer, working on the information point.*

SEB So, tell me Justin, how are we using what you found out when you were doing your Masters?

JUSTIN Well, it's difficult, Seb. (*Frowns*) The main problem is student engagement, I think.

SEB (*Raises eyebrows*) Yes?

JUSTIN Well, yes, there seems to be a concern about engagement generally. I found some good stuff, really relevant - stuff that practitioners elsewhere use, but what I kept getting from the students was, 'Oh yes, that looks good, but I'm too busy. That's why I don't come to those sessions you put on.'

SEB Well, they could be busy (*spreading his hands*) – working longer hours in their part time jobs these days.

JUSTIN (*Nods*) Yes, they may be, but sometimes it means busy watching Netflix – that's been scheduled, maybe with friends, so coming to something they know is likely to be useful, even interesting, is out of the question. Of course, some do, but generally, what I ended up thinking after my course was, 'How do you engage this cohort coming through?' Once upon a time we'd cracked it - it was easy to engage them. Then, social media came along. We used that. It's even post that now.

SEB (*Raising his eyebrows, sounding slightly frustrated*) Oh heck. Does anything seem to work?

JUSTIN Well, (*turning to* RACHEL) Rachel might have a view on that. Rachel, what do you think in terms of new things we're doing to try to get students to use the resources?

RACHEL Er, well, (*looking up from computer*) we did try putting those self-help links on our website, but you didn't think they were using them, did you?

JUSTIN (*Nods*) I was unsure. I thought it might not be immediate enough - this instant generation.

RACHEL Oh, yeah, so instead of sending them the link to something, we actually show

them it straight away.

SEB Oh. Interesting. (*Looking at them both*) Does it work any better?

RACHEL Well, while they're with you looking at it, they might say something like, 'Oh, that's a good idea – I could try that', but you don't know … (*Shakes her head*)

JUSTIN It probably is taking them a bit closer to engaging with the information. But it seems a bit passive on our part – that we're falling into the trap of doing it for them. In a way my findings were, 'If you can't beat them join them. Find a way of giving them something as instant as possible.' But, Seb, how is that generation going to go on? We've mulled this over, haven't we, Rachel?

RACHEL Yes, we did at the team meeting. (*Smiling doubtfully*) I don't think we found a solution, did we?

SEB No, it's a complex issue it seems. Many components. Perhaps this is something we can talk about a bit more, think about who else to share it with. What do you think?

JUSTIN Yes, of course. I'm fascinated by it, even though I can't see there's an answer.

Scene closes

SCENE 2

DEBBIE's *office*
JUSTIN *and* DEBBIE *are seated at a circular table; the voice recorder is switched on.*
JUSTIN *has been considering his Masters experience, alongside other courses he has taken.*

JUSTIN That encouragement for learning [*from his former line manager*] did match my kind of view of learning. Like I said last time, 'Am I in love with the notion of learning … (*Laughs*) rather than the work learning requires?' However, I am going to be learning again (*refers to external training directly relevant to his job for which he had just registered*)

DEBBIE Excellent.

JUSTIN And I'm excited, 'cos that's work, that's something to be throwing myself into and really will be practical and helpful to people.

DEBBIE (*Nods*) Yeah. Sounds good.

JUSTIN So, it's whetted my appetite again and that's more manageable (*laughs*) than taking on a PhD.

DEBBIE It could be that it triggers ideas about how you might use a PhD or a professional doctorate. For example, having the title might offer some - maybe in a superficial way - kudos to what you're saying.

JUSTIN Leanne (*Justin's former line manager*) said that.

DEBBIE If you're saying you're Dr. Boden –

JUSTIN Do you know, I think in a university that carries a lot of weight, but it's not something that interests me one little bit. The title. I can't even imagine myself using it! I really would have to force myself.

DEBBIE Ok, but it's possible once you have the title you can promote your passion to a more receptive audience, even if you don't like using it!

JUSTIN Ok. I see that. Just a shame that that's what it takes sometimes.
D'you know what I love? I've realised why I enjoyed my dissertation for my Masters. For my research as an undergraduate it was very much, 'Do the research, find out what you want to find out, talk about it.' OK. But the Masters was, 'We obviously expect things to come up or you make mistakes or you could have thought of something better. Make use of that.' It's reflection – through the dissertation. Being able to say, every time I found out something interesting, to caveat it noting the limitations.

DEBBIE Yeah. No easy answers!

JUSTIN I like that you're allowed to do that, have the licence to do that. Proper reflection comes back to what I was saying before. True reflection – who I am as a person and why do I think this way. It takes into account you're a human being. And it's great you can be uncertain, change your mind. 'Cos things are complex. Many ways to deal with them.

The conversation ended with more consideration of research project design, with JUSTIN *suggesting potential focus groups for* DEBBIE's *research.*

Scene closes

Appendix 2 Article written and published in 2017

The ignorant manager: conceptualising impact with Rancière

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to offer a response to expressions in the literature concerning the limitations of critical reflection, using Rancière's exposition of the role of values and reasonableness to examine how forms of negotiated work-based learning can support learners' pathways to impact in their organisation. The implications for work applied management in terms of enabling these employees to make an impact are considered.

Design/methodology/approach – Vignettes illuminate and articulate Rancière's (1991, 2010) ideas, the vignettes constructed through events experienced and narrated, perhaps imagined, tutorial conversations, assignments and work practices. Such construction of "multiple layers of fiction and narrative imaginings" draws on Sparkes (2007, p. 522). They consider individuals' negotiation of working practices using ideas developed during their studies, and personal and professional development prompted by unexpected insights into their capabilities, interests, and possible roles.

Findings – Negotiated work-based learning appears to offer the individual opportunity to take responsibility for action in his/her learning and in his/her workplace, but effect depends on several factors, and can be perceived in different ways. Students' encounter with autonomy in their studies resonates with Rancière's belief in equality. In the workplace (becoming "citizens" alongside "reasonable" individuals) their agency might, at best, lead to "reasonable moments", as they encounter both negative and positive challenges of work applied management.

Practical implications – Successful utilisation of agency in learning prompts expectations of responsibility and equality in the workplace. Such equality can lead to diverse, unpredicted insights and consequent opportunities for changes in practice.

Originality/value – This is the first paper to utilise Ranciére's ideas to offer a critical consideration of both learning provision and workplace practice. Consideration of his profound stance on individuals' freedom and agency provides rich (but challenging) prompts for analysis of one's own practice, and the potential for impact when the manager is "ignorant".

Keywords Impact, Work-based learning, Teaching and learning, Autonomy, Ignorant manager, Negotiated

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In line with literature that considers the limitations of critical reflection within work-based learning programmes (Wall, 2016a, b), this paper introduces a perspective which might indicate a way of both deepening and widening one's understanding of critical reflection so that its impact might be stronger and more supportive of action than is sometimes the case, and more directly relevant to work applied management. It does this through focussing on and applying ideas expressed by Rancière (1991) in The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation. One's initial encounter with Rancière's views so articulated is startling. Although Rancière recognises the significance of the teacher, this is not due to the teacher carrying out the commonly assumed roles and responsibilities associated with the role (such as explaining topics, and guiding learners), but to their duty to direct the learner's will to learn for themselves. Rancière continues to surprise through

his questioning of what are possibly taken-for-granted concepts. For example, he critiques "progression" as "the new way of saying inequality" (p. 119): one will never progress sufficiently; there is always more to do, and someone already there to enable you to edge along to the next stage. Perseverance in pursuing Rancière's ideas might lead to perceiving the accuracy of the title of his work, and a deep awareness of equality.

Rancière (2010) continued to identify the diverse roles encountered in life, how they positioned people in the social order, and how harmonisation of these roles should be refused: if one mediated equality – through negotiation, adjustment of perspectives and perceptions – to arrive at apparently orderly relations, this could only be done according to the "dominant explanation" (p. 15); there would still be inequality, but it would be invisible, masked by the dominant understandings and perceptions. What then, for one's role as a tutor? Is it possible for work-based learning to support learners' autonomy? If it is, what impact might this have – on the learner, on their organisation, or more widely? What are the "everyday" implications for the workplace, in terms of employee relations, expectations, and responsibilities? What are the implications for work applied management?

In a work-based learning programme founded on negotiated learning, centred on each learner's work context, where critical reflection plays a significant part, it is possible for a tutor's stance to accord with Rancière's. In such circumstances, learners can experience profound personal and professional impact. However, the consequences for organisational impact are uncertain and might be dependent on certain conditions, such as the individual's formal position in the organisation, attitude and confidence, the culture and assumptions of the organisation and/or the staff. This can suggest limitations for Rancière's "ideal", which perhaps Rancière (1991) recognises, through, for example, the wish for "reasonable moments" (see below) rather than aiming for an end to social order. If the ignorant schoolmaster succeeds where others do not, could the ignorant manager effect organisational impact by doing little other than accepting autonomy of the workforce?

The paper begins with a consideration of Rancière's (1991) argument, challenging at the time, still revolutionary in its values, assumptions and consequent charge. Rancière's (2010) later review is also examined alongside critiques of his work, to arrive at a critical understanding of his stance on education, and its wider implications. Work-based learning is considered through a Rancière lens; its potential personal, professional and organisational impact identified through presentation of stories from the field. The implications for the workplace lead to evaluation of the use and relevance of Rancière's ideas to work applied management, for instigating organisational as well as personal and professional impact.

Literature review

Rancière (1991) articulates his view of equality through examination of the teaching of Jacotot, a late eighteenth century teacher whose Flemish-speaking pupils learned French not through his explication, but through their autonomous use of a bilingual edition of Telemaque. Jacotot could not speak Flemish, and so could not explain aspects of the French language to his students; they could not ask him for help, as they did not speak French. Despite these apparently unsupportive conditions, the students learned French. Rancière (1991) presents this as an example of emancipatory learning among equals. He uses it to consider the role of the teacher (or "master", as he calls the teacher in this work) which he suggests it to direct the will of his students, but not their intelligence. Rancière suggests Jacotot made the students aware of their own intelligence, and their equality with him. Jacotot's story enables Rancière to expound his theory, not just in relation to education, but also more widely to the social order, where, he argues, there is complex material inequality.

Part of this complexity is due to the way the hierarchy in the social order might conflict with commonly held assumptions. Rancière talks of "superior inferiors" – each person subservient

to the one he represents to himself as inferior (p. 86). Thus, the teacher (or "master") might appear to be superior to his/her learners, possessing knowledge and understanding to impart. However, the tutor is actually dependent on his/her learners: their need provides him/her with activity, identity. This startling and apparent upturning of the common assumption, that those defined socially as inferior are subservient to those defined as superior, indicates Rancière's critical stance: one is dependent on inferiors to confirm one's superiority. This stance is relevant for work-based learning in terms of the learner/tutor relationship, individual roles and their equality. The wider relevance and consequences of this view for work applied management should also be considered in relation to work-based learners as employees, alongside their managers and/or colleagues.

Rancière (1991) indicates his understanding that we cannot always act equally (should we want to maintain social order), outlining two opposing roles we each possess: a "reasonable man" who recognises himself as equal to other men (whatever their position in the social order) and a citizen ("man fallen into the land of inequality") (p. 91). The balance of roles is needed to support order, but the reasonable man will always recognise this and preserve his reasonable perspective on equality of intelligence, despite the irrationality and inequality of the social order.

He will consider what can be done with reason's power, how it can "remain active in the heart of extreme irrationality" (Rancière, 1991, p. 95). Rancière does not expect society to be completely, permanently, reasonable, but hopes for "reasonable moments", which arise through individuals' "reciprocal recognition of reasonable wills" (p. 96). He asserts that actual, immediate emancipation requires us to "learn how to be equal men in an unequal society" (p. 133). The emancipated person can obey superiors knowing they are his equals and can emancipate others. For Rancière, like Jacotot, equality is "not an end to attain, but a point of departure, and a supposition to maintain in every circumstance" (p. 138).

Equality does not depend on the quality or quantity of one's knowledge. Emancipation is gained through teaching oneself, and others, what one does not know. While one might assume explanation will help the learner become equal (eventually) to the teacher, this equality is always some way off. Explication, asserts Rancière (1991), divides people into those with and without knowledge, and perpetuates inequality. He questions the use of explication: when the source is available, understanding might be harder if explanation is inserted to help access it, leading to an explanation of the explanation – "regression ad infinitum" (p. 4). Yet the system (and therefore the explicator) depends on assuming an explicator is needed to help the ignorant learn, no matter that the ignorant learned to speak when young without such help. Despite this dependency on his/her learners, the role of tutor/explicator, responsible for judging whether learning has taken place, positions the ignorant (i.e. the learner, the recipient of the explication) as forever inferior; there will always be something more that only the explicator knows. In accepting this, the learner submits to "the hierarchical world of intelligence" (p. 8). This "stultification" pervades learning from school days onwards: ownership of one's learning, of independent intelligence, is not possible. Should one wish to promote equality, it is important to consider the degree to which it is possible for learners and tutors to be equal and how this is demonstrated, the degree to which explication hinders or helps this, and the implications for work applied management. Considering Rancière's stance in relation to education, a criticism might arise regarding apparent inequality in learning caused by individual, social or psychological circumstances. For example,May (2010) considers individual differences to be due to our being "nearly equally intelligent" (p. 77) although he minimises this apparent critique of Rancière with acceptance of the need for intelligence equality in order to challenge justification for hierarchical divisions.

Bourdieu's work might help one understand material inequality. For example, the "structured and structuring structure" of one's habitus (Maton, 2012, p. 50) might constrain

the range of one's experience. How and where one's cultural capital is different from that of peers might influence one's development (Moore, 2012). While a Rancière stance is founded on equality, Bourdieu could help a tutor recognise challenges students face today. Applying his consideration of capital and habitus (Maton, 2012) in conjunction with Rancière's perspective would support a relevant and individual exertion of will. Bourdieu (2000) has indicated how inequality might be configured and arise. While Rancière asserts equality, Bourdieu starts from the assumption of inequality. However, Bourdieu might enable a more realistic, individual application of "reasonableness".

Pelletier (2009) alludes to a fundamental difference between Bourdieu and Rancière: Bourdieu explains inequality as the poor not succeeding academically "because they cannot formulate scholarly discourse", whereas Rancière asserts that lack of academic success is the result of "their discourse not being treated or heard as scholarly" (p. 145). This prompts one to consider how, if Pelletier is right, one can allow all learners' voices to be heard. While adoption of Rancière's stance might be combined with other concepts, as indicated, practical challenges remain when seeking to enact it as a tutor: Rancière's (1991) suggestion that assessment is irrelevant to emancipation seems legitimate: individuals vary in how they use (and so demonstrate) emancipation. However, this might lead one to question how to work to emancipation in higher education today, where it is assumed that quality can be measured and students' performance graded (with significant implications for their place in the social order) (Johnson, 2015). Teachers wishing to support this stance in these measured times might direct the students' will to emancipation, treating them as "reasonable men" do, with equal intelligence, while concurrently preparing students for institutionalised assessment, which cannot assess emancipation quality and quantity.

Methodology

Such an approach might seem idealistic and impractical. How, as a tutor, might one demonstrate one's belief that the learner can use his own intelligence to learn, and make the learner believe this also? How might one give the learner consciousness of "what an intelligence can do when it considers itself equal to any other and considers any other equal to itself" (Rancière, 1991, p. 39)? What are the effects of doing this? The extent to which programmes of negotiated work-based learning are emancipatory, and their consequent potential impact, are examined here, through consideration of different students' stories. A narrative approach is taken. Vignettes illuminate and articulate Rancière's (1991, 2010) ideas. Clough's (2002) guidance is followed: "in setting out to write a story, the primary work is the interaction of ideas" (p. 8). Clough refers to the opportunity this approach offers to get to the "heart of social consciousness" (p. 8), maintaining significant elements of events and conversations, but preserving anonymity. He suggests fictionalised narrative fits with a move to moral accountability in methodological concerns. Brockmeier (2013) might concur, alluding to stories and storytelling practices as "forms of life", rather than ontological entities (p. 267).

While the most effective reporting method for all research is not clear, it can bring conflicting perspectives and understandings to light, as Andrews et al. (2013) suggest, sometimes through collecting data that become available through the wide range of sources that storytellers identify. Wall and Rossetti (2013) suggest storytelling/listening draws on both sides of the brain in order to both make sense of one's experiences and to process our emotions; they refer to the recognition of the potential power of storytelling for motivation and transformation in organisations. Stories enable the "small things" to be included, paid attention to; it is sometimes these apparently inconsequential elements that are key to a particular understanding. The stories here consider individuals' negotiation of working practices using ideas developed during their studies, and personal and professional development prompted by unexpected insights into their capabilities, interests and possible roles. In a negotiated programme of work-related study where each learner is in employment, studying with the overall intention of improving their practice, negotiation of what is

learned, when, how, and how it is assessed both supports the relevance of the programme for each individual, whatever their specific context, interest and aim, and (it would seem) positions the learner as autonomous. The tutor is inevitably "ignorant" (a requirement of emancipatory learning), asking questions of the learner who has specific practice knowledge and understanding the tutor does not. The ignorant teacher cannot verify that the student has learned the "right things" but he can verify "that the student has searched" (Rancière, 1991, p. 31). In programmes incorporating critical reflection, responsibility for demonstrating this search also resides with the learner.

The impact of such positioning is considered below, using vignettes of students undertaking a programme of negotiated work-related study, to illuminate and articulate Rancière's (1991, 2010) ideas; the vignettes are constructed through events experienced and narrated, perhaps imagined, tutorial conversations, assignments and work practices. Such construction of "multiple layers of fiction and narrative imaginings" draws on Sparkes (2007, p. 522). The personal, professional and organisational impacts in each case are outlined, leading on to consideration of implications for the workplace and, in particular, the role of the manager.

James moves on

James e-mailed me to arrange a tutorial. I was pleased to see him, thinking he had given up on his studies when he had produced no draft work for a few months:

I'm sorry, it's doing my head in. I've been on this module for ages, haven't I?

Well, yes, it's a while. In fact, I thought you'd decided not to carry on, but just didn't want to letme know.

Yeh, I don't want to carry on. You know I don't like studying. Takes me ages to read anything. I was just doing it cos I won't get any further without a degree.

Our conversation continued, leading us to arrange a schedule for James's completion of the module. He completed, gaining a modest pass. He progressed, taking other modules, some of which took similarly lengthy periods. Tutorials did not indicate any change of heart.
Well, that is a student's choice. Getting the assignments in (eventually), working through the programme – that is what I need to keep tabs on. Disappointing if someone is not enjoying it, but that is not really recorded, is it? (Well, maybe through NSS results, etc.), whereas completions and marks are.

The penultimate module came: project-focussed, requiring James to identify an area of his work for development that could provide a practice goal. We met to discuss the project, allow learning outcomes to emerge, and agree assessment methods. This was a module in which he therefore had considerable autonomy:

So you'll use those learning outcomes when you're reading my work? How do we make sure it's up to standard?

I'll be looking to see if you show that you've learned the things you've set out to learn. For example, with that one about understanding new employees' learning needs, I'll be looking to see what you write about those needs, how you found out about them, how your reading about employability, maybe human resources, or about company policy and so on, helped you.

But what if it's rubbish?

You might come up with ideas that surprise me – you're working on something where you'll become the expert and I'll know very little. I might not agree with everything you say, but you're the one that will have done the work. If you justify what you say – give examples,

relate to your reading – then that's what I'm interested in assessing – how well you do that.

Hmm. It could still be rubbish.

Why?

I might get the wrong end of the stick.

What makes you think that?

Just how hard I find the reading, and how long the writing takes me. I want to make points quickly but can't.

What about cutting down on the writing by doing a presentation for part of the assessment?

Oh no – who to?

I explained the options and he said he had given it a go. Draft work came in; preparations were made for final submission and presentation. James set a fast study pace, leading to a professional, informed presentation (apparently the first he had ever done outside of job interviews) complemented by a good written piece: thoughtful, relevant, up-to-date, creative.

In the subsequent "Exit" module James showed similarly strong personal engagement, and indicated a developing, surprising self-image:

I never saw myself as teaching anyone anything. However, I enjoyed that last module, creating resources, asking staff to try them. That makes me want further opportunities.

What had led to this? Perhaps it was the greater autonomy in the penultimate module. Perhaps that was the first time he had felt in control of his learning, of identifying what he wanted to learn and achieve. Perhaps each previous module had seemed a challenge set by someone else (the tutor), and his job was to work out what they wanted and accomplish it, the object being to pass: "he wouldn't have followed the route he has just been led down" (Jacotot, cited in Rancière, 1991). This time, the object was to create something that addressed workplace problems he had perceived.

Successful completion of the assignment was matched with successful creation of workplace resources. James saw how he could use his course to achieve things beyond marks, and have an effect in the workplace. Synthesis of creativity and workplace impact seemed to trigger deeper intrinsic impact, as demonstrated in "Exit" when he talked about what gave him a sense of achievement, and outlined his interest in taking on responsibilities relating to staff development – something he had never considered previously.

While the impact of negotiated work-based learning appeared to happen quite late on in his programme, it was powerful when it did. Here was someone who had said he hated his studies, who found himself slowed down by dyslexia, who focussed on the minimum needed to get each assignment completed and once done that was it, on to the next one. The penultimate assignment, where I truly had to stand at the door as Rancière (1991) advises while James went on the journey, offered autonomy which led him to follow his own priorities. This seemed to inspire personal as well as professional exploration, continuing into the final module, from which emerged someone perceiving their potential for impact on the organisation, who had stronger self-efficacy and self-esteem, and who began to consider how further study might fit with his growing interest in developing his role at work:

What? Are you saying you'd like to carry on to do a Masters now? But you've been saying

since you started how much you hate studying.

I know – it's just this last few months – I've actually enjoyed it. Those guides I created, it was good working out what to do, how to do it, asking people what they thought. I never thought I was creative.

They are really good. Even I can understand them.

Well, that was a help – you saying you didn't know how to use your own equipment.

Yeh, I guess I'm a great example of how things need to be written in as basic a way as possible. I give up quite quickly.

I know (laughs).

We talked more about implications. The guides are used in James's organisation. James maintains his interest in developing in this area, but opportunities allowing him to do this as a normal part of his job are limited, constrained by organisational policies and practices. While organisational effectiveness depends largely on employees having clear roles and responsibilities, boundary blurring might yield surprisingly constructive impact. This is challenging, taking staff into unfamiliar territory where the outcomes are unclear. Sometimes, a manager who can accept temporary ignorance, awaiting outcomes to emerge, can facilitate powerful impact from workers.

Carl's research to action

Carl, in contrast, was already a Manager when he enroled for a negotiated work-related learning programme. Living abroad, engagement was online; poor connections in his country prevented aural contact via Skype or other such programmes. While unfamiliar with the academic conventions relating to his particular course, Carl was confident in his learning and had the capacity to implement many of the changes in practice his studies led him to identify. Carl's greater confidence led him to ask for more guidance than James did, and there was the possibility of my "explication" involving far more than "standing at the door". I explained critical reflection in detail, providing a list of questions he could adapt and apply to prompt his critical analysis.

Carl used this effectively, although I perceived that my programme's – in fact UK higher education's – emphasis on critical reflection might be a cultural characteristic. "You're referring to academic colonialism. Yes, it is just one way of thinking things through, analysing them. There's plenty of others", agreed an external examiner. So – implications for me? I was perplexed. What was the "right" thing to do? Providing a "recipe" of optional ingredients for critical reflection seemed to work: the assignments indicated Carl's developing skills of critical analysis, but was this the result of "moulding"? Was he, in effect, like James – learning the rules to follow, to achieve his award? As with James, I shrugged my shoulders mentally. I thought, "Well, he's on a UK course, part of that is getting to understand the expectations, the assessment criteria. If he learns this without deep 'engagement', does it matter?"

I wanted to find out more, to find out if there were other expectations or criteria that would resonate more strongly with Carl's culture, but other than an e-mailed question or two, I did not follow this up. Fair enough – Carl had chosen this course, it was my job to help him succeed, and that might include explaining elements more fully or differently than I did with students who had only ever known UK education.

Carl's manner, and preferred writing style was modest, possibly finding it difficult to focus on his own approach and performance, and the consequent impact in formative

work. I sensed that he was reluctant to change this following my feedback. Therefore, one had to read his work with much thought to what might be unspoken, when considering impact. Even in his final assignment – an insider-researcher work-based dissertation – he appeared to wish to make little of the contribution his studies could make immediately to his company, and eventually to the sector as a whole. However, the impact did emerge: his research led to a set of recommendations for his company to implement to face effectively their competitive challenge. Despite my doubts for much of his studies about the amount of autonomy Carl was actually taking, I realised in his final project that his creativity – unprompted by me – established his independence firmly. Looking back, I saw that all my "explication" had not prevented similar creativity throughout his studies. The final work included a section of critical reflection on his performance as a researcher and in his studies. I realised I was surprised by what I read because I had perceived little personal impact prior to this. However, completing both a UK masters programme, and carrying out research, led Carl to refer to the significant impact on his self-image.

Previously, he had seen himself as a manager in a big company, judged himself to be capable in his field. Engagement in the course had opened up a whole new world he could access in ways he felt were interesting and useful; as a researcher he was seeking to find things out. He had been unsure he could manage this role, but had enjoyed the "journey".

My last contact with Carl indicated that studying had had significant impact on both personal and professional development, contributing to his promotion to a senior manager's role with responsibility specifically in the topic he had been researching. This was a new area for his company, Carl's line managers being comparatively ignorant in this field and, apparently, willing for Carl to lead. Despite my doubts, the work-based learning programme seems to have enabled personal, professional and organisational impact, possibly in a sustainable way.

Tracy's communication impact

While Carl might demonstrate that it is possible to effect impact should one's organisational position be sufficiently senior, a brief glimpse at Tracy's situation indicates more modest roles might also allow this to happen. Attending a workshop for a communication skills module,

Tracy was quiet in manner, while making constructive comments or asking questions. She hesitantly suggested an aspect of practice to focus on for her assignment which seemed reasonable and would require some collaboration with colleagues for operational impact. Choosing to use a storyboard as part of her assessment, she also presented this visual image of her journey to the team and the manager. While the work problem she considered was not immediately resolved, Tracy's presentation sufficiently impressed her manager to request action from the technical team. Perceiving how her work has influenced her manager, Tracy continues to contribute to organisational development, changing signage in the office and suggesting to colleagues that they share how they write to their clients, so an increasingly friendly tone of communication develops:

I was a bit nervous, asking people to share. Especially because one person's been there for ages. She's very experienced. But she was dead keen! And we made it a bit more fun as well, bringing in cake which we ate while we had a read and a chat.

What does your manager think? It sounds great, but sometimes […].

Oh, she's been fine. She's not really there very much because she has to visit all the sites, so there's usually only one day a week when she's in. When she knew I was studying this sort of degree she said.
"Tracy, it'd be great to use your studies in the office. It's up to you what you do. Try to

involve the others, but you'll get loads of ideas so use them!" So that made me think it'd be OK to make suggestions.

Tracy seems to have a manager willing to be "ignorant", perhaps recognising the beneficial impact Tracy might have if given free rein. The organisational impact is happening. As for Tracy, while perhaps she already possessed a quiet self-confidence, her engagement in negotiated work-based learning leads her to use this confidence, along with her growing knowledge, to develop her own, and her colleagues', practice.

Discussion

Reviewing these case studies leads me to conclude that in a negotiated work-based learning programme, the tutor's ignorance (of the learner's specific context and interests in particular) can afford a stronger equality than might be possible in other programmes, where tutors possess knowledge learners seek to understand. Rancière (1991) decries explication: the need for explication implies inequality. I recognise his reference to "superior inferiors" in myself: I need students to need me to explain things, otherwise what is my role?

Certainly, with all the students above, I did much explaining – of assignment requirements, of relevant concepts, of academic conventions, and so on. However, they also explained much to me. In fact, my technical ignorance seemed to inspire James's creativity. Reciprocal explication abounded. In such programmes the tutor's ignorance both supports equality and promotes learner autonomy. Personal, professional and organisational impact is possible. Rancière's appreciation of the ignorant schoolmaster could be challenged, however, from an operational perspective. For example, he offers little guidance on how to drive the learner's will (the duty he recognises as legitimate for the tutor). Yet motivation is perhaps easier when one's capital fits the field (Bourdieu, 2000). My strategy with James and Carl when there seemed to be a mismatch was to increase explication. While with Carl a possible motivation "dip" recovered quickly, for James it was only when he began the module where independence was essential that his motivation became strong. Both students brought their personal capital into play. Tracy is perhaps a good example of a "reasonable woman": low down the social order in the organisation, cautious (possibly as a consequence) in her attempts to apply her learning in practice, she nevertheless persisted, modest in manner but also holding an expectation that her approach would have an impact, that it was equal to that of others.

Implications

As a tutor on a negotiated work-based learning course, I can legitimately be seen as ignorant (of learners' specific contexts and priorities) and am able to practise my values of equality and learner autonomy (to some extent). I perceive learners' participation in such a programme that can affect personal and professional impacts. Additionally, in relation to work applied management, the case studies indicate that organisational impact might require the learner's manager to also effect ignorance. Carl, already a manager, recognised his ignorance in his desire to arrive at new insights and understandings through his research, and was supported to effect organisational impact through his managers' recognition of their own ignorance. Tracy's manager spelled out this comparison, making clear she expected/wished for Tracy to have an organisational impact through her studies. James, in a more hierarchical organisation, appeared constrained in his organisational impact. His managers, while appreciating his creation of staff guides, drew on their perception of the organisation and understanding of roles and responsibilities in explaining how certain developments of his role were impractical.

T

hus, the potential impact of experiencing autonomy and equality might be thwarted if one's manager is not ignorant. Rancière (2010) recognises this, in talking about the reasonable man who perceives equality, but who, as a citizen, understands the circumstances which make this invisible. While work-related studies might evince equality, organisational

impact might be supported if a tutor also prompts learners' consideration of equality in the workplace. A tutor might also take a critical look at critical reflection, by considering how it might support collaboration as well as autonomy, and by being open to other ways of thinking which may be more familiar to the learner and their context.

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Appendix 3 Application for ethical approval

RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM
POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS / STAFF

Return to: *educationethics@chester.ac.uk*
Faculty of Education and Children's Services,
University of Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester, CH1 4BJ

Section 1 - APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name of Applicant:
Deborah Scott

Address:
12 Green Bank Chester CH4 7EH

Contact details
Telephone: 07551838842 Email: 0211780@chester.ac.uk debbie.scott@chester.ac.uk

SECTION 2 – PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: **Experiences of students studying Work Based Integrative Studies programmes**	
What is the purpose of your research?	Please select one:
MASTERS DISSERTATION	
EdD / PhD THESIS	☑
OTHER POSTGRADUATE	
STAFF – RESEARCH COUNCIL/OTHER EXTERNAL FUNDER	
STAFF – INDEPENDENT/NON-EXTERNALLY FUNDED	

STUDENT / RESEARCHER(S)

SURNAME	*FIRST NAME*	*PHONE*	*EMAIL*
Scott	Deborah	07551838842	0211780@chester.ac.uk debbie.scott@chester.ac.uk

Updated form revised 14/11/16 by J McKay

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR(S)

TITLE & SURNAME	*FIRST NAME*	*PHONE*	*EMAIL*
Professor Adams	Jeff	01244 511515	j.adams@chester.ac.uk
Dr. Devarakonda	Chandrika	01244 511544	c.devarakonda@chester.ac.uk

IF A STUDENT APPLICATION (MA / EdD / PhD):

Have you discussed your application with your supervisor: **YES**
If no, please explain why not:

If applicable, do you have a completed and signed RO1 form for your proposed study? **YES / NO**

FUNDING DETAILS

NAME OF FUNDER	Internal funding for EdD (employed by University of Chester) Funding for research: self-funding

PLEASE PROVIDE APPROXIMATE DATES FOR STARTING AND COMPLETING RESEARCH
(dates cannot be retrospective – only include dates after the ethics committee review)

	(dd/mm/y)		*(dd/mm/yy)*
From:	October 2017	**To:**	December 2018

ANTICIPATED PROJECT OUTPUTS (LIST ALL THAT APPLY):
(Eg. Thesis, journal article, conference presentation, book chapter)

The main intended output is the thesis for my EdD.

It is likely that I will refer to aspects of my research in journal articles, conference presentations, and that my research will inform my practice.

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RESEARCH PROJECT PRECIS

Please include a summary of your research proposal. The box will expand so please write as much as you feel is necessary to adequately explain your proposed research.

Experiences of students studying Work Based Integrative Studies programmes

Research Aims

I propose to carry out research into the experiences of postgraduate learners studying the Work Based Integrative Studies (WBIS) programme. This is a part-time work based learning course for distant learners who wish to study on a programme related to their employment.

I will take a narrative research approach. Clough (2002) articulates the potential power of narrative research to get the 'heart of social consciousness' (p. 8); Brockmeier (2013) refers to the development of narrative to include narratives beyond the textual to the everyday, beyond the personal to cultural, social and political connections. I am interested in the stories students develop of their lives and their studies, and how these stories impact on individual experiences of WBIS. I expect the stories to be transdisciplinary (Brockmeier, 2013), incorporating connections with academic work, social ideas, cultural practices, and so on.

I hope my research will deepen and widen my understanding of and sensitivity to my students, so I better perceive their perspectives on their studies, and how these are informed by wider contextual factors.

The research question is:

What impact do students' narratives have on their experience of WBIS?

Methodology

Sample:

I intend to interview up to six individuals who are either current or recent WBIS students, either face to face or by Skype (thereby enabling inclusion of international students, and others who study without visiting the University). My head of department has given approval for my research. After explaining my research intention to my colleagues (noting Costley, Elliott and Gibbs's (2010) advice to consult with colleagues as a 'matter of courtesy' (p. 5)) I will send an initial invitation for expressions of interest to WBIS students, and in this I will indicate the research focus, methods, intended outcomes (see Appendix A: possible content for this communication). Assuming there is sufficient interest, I will then select approximately six learners to invite to participate in the research, aiming for a range across duration of study (from recent starters through to recent completions), modules chosen, professional contexts. I expect the individuals in the sample to vary also in terms of their prior relationship with me: some may be students for whom I am personal academic tutor, others I might have taught, with others there will have been little/ no previous contact. A participant information sheet (Appendix B) will explain the research and the nature of participation in more detail; I will ask those still willing to participate after reading that to confirm this by signing a consent form (Appendix C). If the number of participants is smaller than six I will review my strategy in consultation with my supervisors, considering the reasons for this, and whether certain aspects of my data collection method need to be amended.

Research Design:

This will be a qualitative research project, and I intend that a reflexive approach will enable me to adopt what Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis (2012) term a pragmatic position, in which it is possible to move between different philosophical positions, and which might support a socio-constructivist stance encompassing a number of different approaches that the term can signify (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) advise to maintain a questioning of one's approach, identifying one's assumptions and their implications. This seems to be essential for research taking a critical perspective on one's practice, and the assumptions, principles and values on which it is based.

Brockmeier (2013) notes that narrative research is flexible in its ontological foundations. Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou (2013), in considering the diversity of approaches possible within narrative

research, justify its use in part because of its facilitation of the perception of different layers of meaning, enabling one to consider them together, thereby understanding 'more about individual and social change' (p. 2). While 'narrative' commonly means a story, Squire et al (2013) allude to the critical point of narrative, whereby the 'point' is not just the story that emerges, and how it is created, but also the power relations in their construction, consumption, silencing, contesting or accepting, and the effects they have. This resonates with my practice perceptions of WBIS students' stories, emerging in assignments, emails, conversations, which would enable deeply critical reflexive consideration of power relations. I recognise the value of Sparkes's (2007) approach to narrative, in which he creates stories from his everyday work encounters, and his imaginings, which pinpoint pertinent issues (as he perceives them). Similarly, Clough (2002) uses fictionalised narrative to get to deep aspects of practice. I will explore with my supervisors the advisability of widening the data collection and analysis to incorporate such approaches, and also ways of dissemination (see below). Here, it is relevant to say that maintaining reflexivity throughout my work should support critical awareness of choices available and selected.

Method of Data Collection:
The core method of data collection will be semi-structured interviews with up to six people. I intend to interview participants firstly in the near future, and then conduct further interviews with the same individuals a few months later. Between the interviews I propose to ask participants to capture significant moments, events, insights (perhaps using a scrap book) that they show me and we talk about at the second interview. With their permission, I will record and transcribe the interviews. Asking for participation in a second interview might support a shifting of the power relationship, so that the content is controlled more by the interviewee than interviewer; it could also enable participants to think about their experiences from different perspectives, reach new understandings which they could share on the second meeting.

Bell and Waters (2014) indicate the need in narrative research to 'allow the storyteller to structure the conversations, with the researcher asking follow-up questions' (p. 22, citing Gray, unpublished paper). I will need to balance this openness with some steer. As noted above, additional, ethnographic methods could be considered, such as those used by Sparkes (2007) and Clough (2002).

I will analyse the data in relation to the research questions to arrive at relevant findings, presented in the main body of the thesis; secondly, I will seek to capture the essence of the data in creation of a short, accessible anthology, comprised of short stories or vignettes (specific details to be considered in supervision); thirdly, the creative process will be analysed in the main body of the thesis. Ethical considerations will influence my use of such data and reflexivity will support consideration throughout of underlying assumptions, beliefs and values (my own and those of participants).

Ethical considerations

Confidentiality
I will use a code to identify participants throughout my research, and pseudonyms in my thesis. No personal identifying information will be included in my thesis. Upon successful completion of my doctorate all raw data will be destroyed. Prior to that, it will be kept securely in a locked cabinet.

Data use (i.e. in thesis, anthology, and subsequently)
All reference to data will be anonymised. When referring to participants I will ensure that no detail could lead to their identification. Maintenance of confidentiality and data protection might constrain the content of my thesis, and other forms of dissemination. If so, I will refer to this in my thesis in an ethical manner.

Well-being before, during and after interviews (see below)
A participant information sheet (Appendix B) will outline the purpose, focus and nature of the research project, including the commitment asked for by participants, and information about asking questions, expressing concerns and making complaints. The informed consent form will indicate a participant's willingness to be involved.

Interview times and locations will be agreed individually, so that each participant can take part in circumstances with which they feel comfortable. At commencement of each interview, I will refer to

the likely duration, ask about preferences regarding a break, and so on, check that my recording of the discussion is still acceptable, and throughout I will monitor for any indications of discomfort, suggesting breaks, change of topic, or other actions which seem appropriate should this occur.

At the end of the interview I will explain how to contact me with any concerns or questions, and will offer the opportunity to review the transcript I make of their interview. I will follow up this verbal information by email. Bell and Waters (2014) refer to the possibility of participants revealing more than they intended to share publicly, and subsequently asking for removal/ amendments of certain references. My actions are intended to enable that to happen should it be required for a participant's comfort.

I will email participants to let them know my progress throughout key stages of the work, so that they remain informed about the use of their contribution; will repeat my request to contact me should any concerns subsequently emerge.

Colleagues
As an insider-researcher, my research focus has some connection to my colleagues; I might interview a learner for whom they are personal academic tutor, for example; I will be asking participants about their experiences of WBIS, some of which might involve my colleagues. I will indicate to my colleagues the purpose and focus of my research at the outset, asking them to let me know of any concerns or suggestions they might have early on. I have the head of department's permission for the research to take place. I anticipate that colleagues will perceive the research to be neutral or beneficial, rather than negative, but will consider and take appropriate action following any queries, concerns or suggestions they make.

Timescale for research

2017

September
Identifying the literature and beginning to read: narrative research; thirdspace; creativity; work based learning; research methods; reflexivity
October
Continued reading
Discussion with supervisors
Ethical approval application
November
Potential participants contacted. Those interested given participant information sheet and consent form
Continued reading, initial drafting of literature review
First set of interviews

2017/18

December – January
Transcription, initial data analysis, continued reading and development of literature review
Initial storymaking
Discussion with supervisors

2018

February
Second set of interviews
February – April
Transcription, initial data analysis
Further storymaking, continued reading
Discussion with supervisors
May - July
Analysis
Storymaking
Discussion with supervisors
August
Drafting anthology
Writing of full thesis and anthology.

Updated form revised 14/11/16 by J McKay

September
Submission

Relevant Literature

Alvesson, M. & Sköldberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive methodology.* London, United Kingdom: SAGE
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SECTION 3 - ACCESS AND APPROVALS

WILL SUBJECTS BE IDENTIFIED FROM INFORMATION HELD BY ANOTHER PARTY?
(eg. A headmaster, or a local authority)

YES ☐ NO ☑

If YES please describe the arrangements you intend to make to gain access to this information including, where appropriate, which multi centre research ethics committee or local research ethics committee will be applied to. *(No more than 150 words)*

OTHER APPROVALS REQUIRED *Has permission to gain access to another location, organization etc. been obtained? (Eg Local Authorities, etc). Copies of letters of approval to be provided when available.*

YES ☐ NO ☐ NOT APPLICABLE ☑

(If YES, please specify from whom and attach a copy. If NO, please explain when this will be obtained.)

IS THIS PROTOCOL BEING SUBMITTED TO ANOTHER ETHICS COMMITTEE, OR HAS IT BEEN PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED TO AN ETHICS COMMITTEE?

YES ☐ NO ☑

(If YES, please provide name and location of the ethics committee and the result of the application.)

HAVE YOU ATTACHED TO THIS APPLICATION A PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS?

YES ☑ NO ☐ *(If NO, please explain.)*

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HOW WILL INFORMED CONSENT BE OBTAINED/RECORDED?

Signed consent form	☑	**Recorded verbal consent**	☐
Implied by return of survey	☐	**Other** *(Please specify):*	☐

HAVE YOU ATTACHED TO THIS APPLICATION A COPY OF THE CONSENT FORM?

YES ☑ NO ☐ *(If NO, please explain.)*

Updated form revised 14/11/16 by J McKay

SECTION 4 – CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA HANDLING

WILL THE RESEARCH INVOLVE:

- **complete anonymity of participants** ☐
- **anonymised samples or data** ☐
- **de-identified samples or data** ☐
- **subjects being referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from the research?** ☐
- **any other method of protecting the privacy of participants?** *Please describe:* ☐

Upon successful completion of my thesis, all data containing personal identity information will be destroyed.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING METHODS OF ASSURING CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA WILL BE IMPLEMENTED? *Please tick all that apply.*

- **data to be kept in locked filing cabinets** ☐
- **data and identifiers to be kept in separate, locked filing cabinets**
- **access to computer files to be available by password only** ☐
- **other** *(please describe)*

ACCESS TO DATA *(Tick as many as apply)*

Access by named researchers only ☐

Access by people other than named researcher(s) ☐
Please explain who and for what purpose:
Supervisors for advice on data use, analysis and storage

Stored at the Faculty of Education, University of Chester ☐

Stored at another site ☐
Please explain where and for what purpose:
As a part-time student, the main base for my studies is my home, so I will store the data there.

Other *Please explain:* ☐

HANDLING OF DATA

Please state how you intend to manage the data you have collected once your research has been completed.

Upon successful completion of my thesis, all data containing personal identity information will be destroyed. Prior to that, it will continue to be kept in a locked fling cabinet.

SECTION 5 – MONITORING AND STANDARDS

DESCRIBE HOW THE PROJECT WILL BE MONITORED TO ASSURE ETHICAL STANDARDS ARE MAINTAINED

My supervisors will monitor my actions in tutorials and when reading draft work, and will advise throughout the period of study.

HAVE YOU MADE YOURSELF FAMILIAR WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DATA PROTECTION ACT?

YES ☐ NO ☐ *If NO, please explain.*

Updated form revised 14/11/16 by J McKay

HAVE YOU READ THE FACULTY LONE WORKER POLICY?

YES ☑ NO ☐ *If NO, please explain.*

PLEASE DESCRIBE BRIEFLY ANY PRECAUTIONS/PROCEDURES TO PROTECT THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF RESEARCHERS, PARTICIPANTS AND OTHERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROJECT

The participant information sheet will refer to well-being, advising on rights to withdraw, ask questions, complain. The interviews will be carried out in appropriate venues, at a time and place to suit each participant, and safe for both of us. I will ensure no interview exceeds the suggested duration. I will follow up each interview with thanks, check if any ill effect has been experienced, suggesting action if needed, and seek help myself from my supervisors if I feel something is beyond my control. I will maintain a professional approach when carrying out research, looking for signs of distress, or unease, or sickness, and addressing such issues if they arise. If my research causes me mental or physical distress, I will review my plans and make amendments to maintain my health.

DECLARATIONS

IT IS A REQUIREMENT THAT APPLICATIONS MADE BY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS ARE SIGNED BY BOTH STUDENT AND SUPERVISOR.

- The information contained herein is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate.
- I have read the University's ethics guidelines, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application in accordance with the guidelines, and any other condition laid down by the University and the Faculty of Education and Children's Services Ethics Committee.
- I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting this research and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.
- I and my co-investigators or supporting staff have the appropriate, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached application and to deal effectively with any emergencies and contingencies related to the research that may arise.
- **I understand that NO research work involving human participants or data can commence until FULL ethical approval has been given by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.**

Signed (applicant): D. S. Scott **Date:** 30.10.2017

Signed (supervisor): Cherohika D C **Date:** 30.10.17.

Jeff Adams has approved by email

Checklist	***Please tick***
1) Have you filled in all sections of the form?	☑
2) Have you provided appropriate contact details?	☑

Updated form revised 14/11/16 by J McKay

3) **Have you included all additional information with your form? (PIS, consent form, evidence of permissions etc)** ☐✓

4) **If a P/G student application, has your supervisor read and signed the form?** ✓

Updated form revised 14/11/16 by J McKay

Appendix A

Initial invitation for expressions of interest

Dear WBIS student,
I am contacting you to see if you would be interested in taking part in a research project I am carrying out as part of my doctoral studies. My research project will consider the experiences of students studying Work Based Integrative Studies programmes.

To carry out the project, I hope to meet with individual WBIS students to hear about their experiences relating to WBIS: what they talk about could be specific to their studies, it could be wider than that, and include the workplace, interests, other commitments, and so on.

Timing and location would be agreed to suit participants. If you'd like to take part but it's not possible to meet, then we could use Skype or the telephone instead. I would like there to be two discussions with each participant, each one lasting 30 – 40 minutes, with one taking place in the next month or so, and the second taking place a couple of months later.

If you are interested and let me know, I will send you a participant information sheet, which gives more information about the research. After reading that, and discussion of questions or concerns, I will send a consent form to those who will take part, asking them to sign it and return to me. Then we would arrange to meet/ Skype/ ring.

Thanks very much for reading this. If you are interested in taking part, please let me know by .....

Best wishes,

Debbie Scott

debbie.scott@chester.ac.uk

01244 512223

Appendix B

Participant Information Document

Experiences of students studying Work Based Integrative Studies programmes

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?
The purpose of this study is to find out about the experiences of students on Work Based Integrative Studies (WBIS) programmes (experiences of their studies; their work/ employment practice; their personal and professional circumstances and development)

This study will form a part of my studies for a doctorate, and will form the major part of my thesis.

I hope that my findings will help me develop my practice further, and that my understanding and perception of learners' experiences, approaches and contexts will increase.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been randomly chosen as a current (or recent) learner on the Work Based Integrative Studies programme.

Do I have to take part?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect the standard of care you receive in any way. The data collected from your participation before your withdrawal will be removed and destroyed.

What will happen to me if I take part?
If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign the consent form. I will then contact you to explain the aims and objectives of the study and answer your questions.

If you are happy to continue to be a participant, we will arrange to meet for a further discussion (face to face, by Skype or telephone), in which I hope you will tell me about your experiences as a WBIS student. I would like to audio-record this, and transcribe it. Transcription and any other writing I do throughout this work will preserve confidentiality; all references to you and what you say will be anonymous.

We will agree the duration of the discussion in advance (I do not anticipate it lasting longer than 30 – 40 minutes) and I will ensure we do not exceed this. At the end I will ask you to have a further discussion with me in about two months' time. This will follow the same procedure, in terms of making arrangements for date, time location, duration, recording and transcription. I might ask if, in the period between our two discussions, you could note in some way any experiences that seem interesting or significant. It would be up to you if you chose to do that or not, and whatever you decided, I would still like us to have a second discussion.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
There are no disadvantages or risks foreseen in taking part in the study, providing you feel happy to talk to me about your experiences, and are able and willing to give this time to talk to me.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
You may enjoy standing back from your immediate study priorities and think about your experiences more widely and over a longer period. Doing so might lead to insights and new understandings for you as well as for me, which you can take back to your studies and/ or your work.

There is no financial benefit in taking part.

What if something goes wrong?
If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact:

David Cumberland,
Executive Dean,
Faculty of Education and Children's Services,
University of Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester, CH1 4BJ

If you are harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence (but not otherwise), then you may have grounds for legal action, but you may have to pay for this.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?
All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential so that only my thesis supervisors, internal and external examiners, and I will have access to such information.

Participants should note that data collected from this project may be retained and published in an anonymised form. By agreeing to participate in this project, you are consenting to the retention and publication of data.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The results will be written up into a report as part of my doctoral thesis. It is hoped that the findings may be used to develop my practice and, through dissemination, that of other practitioners.
Individuals who participate will not be identified in any subsequent report or publication. On successful completion of my doctorate all raw data will be destroyed. Prior to that it will be kept securely in a locked cabinet and saved on my laptop protected by a password.

Who is organising and funding the research?
The University of Chester funds the research as part of my doctoral studies. I am the organiser of the research, and my doctorate supervisors monitor my actions.

Who may I contact for further information?
If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether or not you would be willing to take part, please contact me:

Debbie Scott: debbie.scott@chester.ac.uk 01244 512223

Thank you for your interest in this research.

Appendix 4 Example of email sent to participant to which play script was attached

Dear
Thanks very much for replying, and being interested to read the script. As I said in my previous email, I've tried to capture in the script one or two of the points I took from what you said in our discussions, largely as a way of bringing the research to life. It also seemed to fit with the narrative research approach – telling a story, and focusing on each participant individually, rather than talking about participants in more general terms only. (I plan to do that as well, but a bit later on in the thesis). Although it's fictional (i.e. the events didn't happen) I was surprised by how much more attention it made me pay to what was actually said, and its significance.

What seemed overwhelming in our discussion was

This was followed by reference to personal features of particular relevance to the play script, such as:

your stance on equality, the personal impact of your studies, and your ideas about organisational development.

I could only write a very brief script, to leave enough room for all the other thesis elements, but I hope I've touched on those topics appropriately.

I will make clear in the thesis that the scripts are my personal creations, drawn from my imagination and personal interpretations of our discussions. I hope there is no reference that could compromise your anonymity.

However, if you have any concerns about anything I've written, or if anything causes you offence, please let me know, and tell me what you would like me to do about it.

Apart from that, what do you think?

Many thanks for your time.
Debbie